

Leavening Agents

Baking Soda:

Also known as sodium bicarbonate, is an alkaline powder. When it is mixed with moisture and acid, it releases carbon dioxide gas. This gas becomes trapped in the dough. When the dough is heated during the baking process, the carbon dioxide gas expands, causing the dough to rise. Many ingredients used in baked goods can provide the acid needed for this reaction such as milk, buttermilk, cocoa, molasses, and cream of tartar.

Baking Powder:

Baking Powder is baking soda that is premixed with an acid chemical, such as cream of tartar. Only moisture provided by dough ingredients is needed for baking powder to produce carbon dioxide gas.

Shortenings

Fats used in a bake shop are often referred to as shortening. The term shortening comes from the fact that fat shortens strands of gluten in dough, making the finished product more tender and less elastic or chewy. Shortenings also add flavor, color, moisture, and richness to baked products.

Margarine:

Margarine is a hydrogenated vegetable shortening that is flavored to serve as a substitute for butter. Along with butter flavor, some margarines incorporate a small amount of natural dairy products to achieve a more authentic butter flavor. Though margarine looks and tastes like butter, it has a slightly higher melting point that may change the quality of the finished product if it is substituted for butter.

Key Points Quick Breads

- Quick breads use chemical leaveners which act more quickly than the yeast used to leaven other baked products.
- Quick breads may begin as either a dough or batter.
- The biscuit method should be used when combining ingredients for biscuits. Care must be taken not to overwork the dough.
- Muffins and cornbread are quick breads that use a liquid shortening or melted solid shortening.

Key Points Breakfast Cookery

- Simmered eggs are cooked in their shell. Their doneness is determined by cooking time.
- Poached eggs are removed from the shell and gently cooked in acidulated water.
- Pancakes, waffles, and French toast are popular American breakfast items. Proper consistency of the batter and proper cooking temperature are keys to quality.
- In most commercial kitchens, bacon is cooked in the oven. Baking sliced bacon in the oven offers the advantage of even cooking, nicely shaped bacon strips and, most importantly, the ability to cook more bacon at one time with less effort.