

# One Bowl

• B A K I N G •

SIMPLE, FROM SCRATCH RECIPES  
FOR DELICIOUS DESSERTS



*Yvonne Ruperti*

*One Bowl Baking*



Blueberry-Plum Cornmeal Upside-Down Cake



*One Bowl*  
BAKING

SIMPLE, FROM SCRATCH RECIPES FOR DELICIOUS DESSERTS

*Yvonne Ruperti*

photography by

*Evan Sung*



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# PREFACE

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The first time that I knew that I was passionate about food was when I was about nine or ten. I was so much more fascinated by the stacks of *Bon Appetit* magazines on the coffee table than I was with my mom's racy, romance-filled *Cosmopolitans*. Sitting on the floor, I'd hungrily thumb through pages of tempting recipes, planning imaginary menus. One of the first that I ever attempted was a retro green grasshopper pie. I drove my family nuts, making them tote me around to buy the ingredients—the crème de menthe, gelatin, special chocolate wafers for the crust. Following each step carefully, I presented my masterpiece hours later. My mom was very open minded to allow me to make the boozy pie, let alone have a slice of it!

As with many bakers, it all started with my great-grandmother Ruth. She knew how to keep things simple. She owned a small collection of cookbooks, used her small kitchen table as a workspace, and never used a food processor, and only used a handful of tools.

But you should have seen the amazing desserts that came from her tiny oven. Cookies, cream puffs, lemon meringue pies, and especially, cakes. No birthday passed without this wonderful woman showing up on our doorstep toting a plastic cake carrier with a scrumptious layer cake waiting within. And her holiday cakes were fabulous. Straight out of her old Baker's Chocolate® cookbook would emerge coconut-covered cakes shaped like a fluffy bunny or a Halloween witch. Ruth showed me that baking never felt like work (though she was known to toss soupy blueberry pies in the garbage right in front of us). Baking could also have a fun and whimsical side, and I soon learned to love it.

Growing up, I constantly surrounded myself with food, because I'm obsessed with eating. But even though I took my first jobs scooping ice cream, flipping grilled cheese sandwiches, waiting tables, and watching cooking shows like *The Frugal Gourmet*, plus spending a majority of my free time in kitchen supply shops, I never considered making a career in the food arts—at least not in the beginning. I wanted to be a veterinarian. But after almost flunking a calculus course at Vassar College, I did a 180 and switched my major to art history. It didn't take long after I graduated to realize that working in a museum was just not going to cut it for me. I needed something more hands-on. After my floundering hit a low point (I made an attempt at becoming a shoe model despite the fact my feet are not exactly photo worthy), things finally took a turn. While riding home on the Metro North train from a show fitting in Manhattan, I read an ad for the Culinary Institute of America, and something clicked.

A tour of the gorgeous Hudson River campus sealed the deal. It was so invigorating to observe the students and chefs all dressed up in their whites and working together in this professional environment. A career that could be hands-on, technical, creative, and would never leave me hungry. This was where I needed to be.

After graduating with a certificate in the pastry arts, I landed an assistant pastry chef job at a massive beachside restaurant and catering hall on Long Island. The Crescent Beach Club gave me my first experience with large scale baking for the huge banquets that would serve hundreds of guests at a time. Only a few months into the job, the head pastry chef quit, and I took over the spot. It was a big position for someone with so little experience, but it forced me to work fast. I relished having my very own pastry kitchen, even though it was in the basement (you never see much daylight as a chef), and the privacy helped sequester me from the all-male kitchen staff, many of whom would puff cigars in the chef's office and run around playing pranks on each other. As a girl chef it's wise to stay above the fray if you can (I didn't completely succeed in that).





Eventually I settled into a tamer situation as pastry chef at The White Hart Inn, in the cute New England town of Salisbury, Connecticut. This was a dream come true. Complete with an upscale dining room, a rustic tap room, plus weddings and weekend brunch, I could bake pretty much anything: farm apple and peach pies, house-baked granola, elaborate plated desserts, wedding cakes, berry cobblers, and fresh muffins. A few years later an opportunity came along to open up my own shop, and I jumped at the chance. I knew nothing of running my own business, and there wasn't even a workable kitchen, but I was hooked on the idea of being in total control of my work. I fell in love with the spot with the adorable little brick building set smack in the middle of horse and dairy farms, so I signed the lease. Months later, after knocking down walls, scouring dirty restaurant kitchen auctions for cheap equipment, and lowering ovens into my bakery's kitchen basement with a pick-up truck, I opened Desserticus. Did I make mistakes? You bet. But there was a freedom and responsibility that I'd never had before. I learned how to deal with emergency situations, how to streamline procedures, and how to work *very* efficiently. (Of course, catching the occasional celebrity popping in to buy one of my muffins was also a pretty big thrill!)

In the spring of 2007, five years into it, I was looking at a new landlord, another five-year lease, and the effects of a surprise flood that ruined much of a kitchen that was already in dire need of repairs. It was serious decision time. Was I willing to invest a huge sum of money into a building that I didn't own? Did I want to run a bakery for the rest of my life? I decided no, and headed off for my next adventure as a test cook and writer for *Cook's Illustrated* magazine at America's Test Kitchen in

Boston. Here, every bit of creativity and baking experience that I'd developed over the years can ~~together in a structured test kitchen environment. I mastered recipe development skills by using the~~ knowledge of the role each ingredient plays in a recipe, and how the ingredients work together. Questions like "If I swap the milk for sour cream, how much baking soda to add?" or "Will the texture of this cupcake worsen if I add more cocoa?" were the daily routine. I learned to pinpoint the flaws in a cake or cookie, and then determine how to fix them. If it was a particularly busy day in the test kitchen, with perhaps 25 or so test cooks and interns on deck, you learned to squeeze into and make do with whatever space you could find, even if it was just big enough for a large cutting board. Maintaining a space-saving frame of mind became second nature.

I've now used my fifteen-plus years of experience as a professional baker to bring you *One Bowl Baking*: a simplified way of baking, and one that makes sense in the home kitchen. Its methods are uncomplicated and accessible to anyone. This book is also a collection of my favorite recipes, some already known to be simple and some that have been rewritten using simpler methods. I hope that this book will inspire you to bake great desserts when you see how easy baking can be. And I hope that the ideas generated in this cookbook become a stepping-stone for you to experiment with your own recipe favorites.

*Happy Baking!*

Yvonne



# THE WAY EVERYONE REALLY WANTS TO BAKE

I've got a secret. When I bake at home, I rarely use multiple mixing bowls. And apologies to my former culinary school teachers, but I hardly ever set up the classic *mise en place*, where all of the ingredients are measured out separately and arranged in bowls before mixing. Instead, I grab as I go, pulling out a bit of baking soda here, salt there, with most of the ingredients landing directly in the bowl—including the eggs. I'm constantly on the lookout for shortcuts in a recipe, asking questions like “Do I *really* need to sift these ingredients?” and “Is *not* stirring the eggs into the milk a deal breaker?” Above all, I avoid having to use my stand mixer or food processor whenever I can.

Is it because I'm lazy or don't care? No, quite the contrary! It's because I'm crazy busy. It's because I don't own a dishwasher. It's because my tiny apartment kitchens have never had enough counter space on which to sprawl out. It's because when I pull my heavy mixer out from the closet everything tumbles out onto the floor. It's because at times I've either not owned any appliances at all or have had to endure ones that whimpered at the simple task of mixing cookie dough.

But ultimately the real reason I bake this way is because it works.

Trust me, you really do not have to trudge through a maze of recipe steps, turn a kitchen upside down, and batten down the hatches to wash a gazillion dishes every time you bake. You do not need to own fancy equipment or a stopwatch to bake a gourmet cake. Years ago my great-grandmother kept things simple in the kitchen because she just didn't own much. But even now, as we all juggle more on our plates, this attitude of simplicity is just as (if not more) relevant. Simple baking *is* modern baking.

*One Bowl Baking* is a delectable cookbook with a straightforward goal: to make baking easier by eliminating unnecessary steps, bowls, appliances, and equipment. The result? Forget about worrying about mixer times and speeds, or number of pulses on a food processor. Each recipe component in the book can be effortlessly measured into and hand mixed using just one bowl. Even better, some recipes don't even need a bowl. (Box mixes aren't even that easy!) With *One Bowl Baking* you get everything you'd want out of baking—natural ingredients, recipes that are a cinch to whip up, less clean up, and delicious results.

I wrote these recipes to make my baking easier. Baking from scratch doesn't have to be work. It can be fun and rewarding. Of course, it's not just you who benefits from these great easy recipes, but all of the friends and family who will eat up your treats. To me, that's what baking is all about. So put out that bowl and get baking!





# CH 1 | GOOD BAKING

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Scratch baking with only one bowl is a simple affair. Even so, it's helpful to be familiar with your basic baking tools, ingredients, and general mixing methods. It's also useful to understand the key ways in which one-bowl recipes are mixed together in order to make the baking process easy while still achieving the results you expect.



## BAKING TOOLS

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Below is a list of the basic items that you'll need to mix and bake the delicious recipes in this book. If you own a similar size pan to any of the ones mentioned below, just keep in mind to adjust baking times accordingly. I've also included other helpful tools that'll save you time in the kitchen.

### Scale

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I can't stress this enough: A digital scale is just about the most indispensable tool in your kitchen. This is because successful scratch baking begins with precise measuring. While I use tablespoons for small ingredient amounts, and liquid measuring cups for liquids, I rarely use cups for large measurements of flour and sugar. Though cup measurements are included with each recipe, a scale ensures that you're measuring correctly—because scooping out a cup isn't as precise as you might think. While I was working in a test kitchen, we once asked a group of test cooks to measure out a cup of flour, then weighed each sample. As you may have guessed, each cup of flour weighed a different amount, meaning that if each of those folks made a batch of cookies, each would have turned out slightly different. These differences are not only important in a test kitchen, but at home as well. Weighing your ingredients will make your baking accurate and consistent every time. And just as important, using a scale makes baking *faster*. Whenever I can, I just place the bowl on the scale and then scoop out each ingredient directly into the bowl to the correct measurement, one right after the

other. Be sure to tare the scale (set to zero) in between ingredients. Measuring out your ingredients this way is also a *cleaner* way to bake. There's less flour all over the counter from dipping and sweeping into various cups, and in the end less utensils dirtied. So if you don't own one yet, drop everything and go out and get a scale right now! Once you start using one, you'll be a convert in no time.

## Bowls

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This one is easy! Because this is one-bowl baking, you'll be using just *one bowl*. I used my favorite large stainless steel bowl for most of the recipes here. It's large enough to mix ingredients easily, and light enough so that I can pop it on the scale without exceeding the weight limit. For recipes that have two parts, for example a batter and then a streusel, I give the bowl a wipe and then go on to the next step. Another alternative is to use a Pyrex® glass bowl, which is microwave-safe and can come in handy if you are melting chocolate in the microwave (more on this later). A 2½ quart-sized bowl is light enough to be used on the scale.

## Cups

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As much as I stress measuring ingredients by weight, there are times when it's maybe more practical to measure by cup (i.e. cubes of apples). For this, a quality set of stainless steel measuring cups and spoons will last you a lifetime. Take it from me, saving money on a cheap set of utensils will not pay off in the end. Cheap metal will bend, volume measurements are not always accurate between brands, and grease is next to impossible to scrub out of plastic. Plus, numbers tend to fade on plastic cups and spoons. For spoons, a set with an ⅛-teaspoon measure is especially useful. For liquids, I've found my heavy-duty Pyrex® 2-cup liquid measuring cup is all I need. I find it handy to melt butter in the microwave, and then I can use it again to measure out my liquids.

## Your three basic utensils

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To mix ingredients, keep on hand a *wooden spoon*, a *whisk*, and a *rubber spatula*. Depending on the recipe, you'll use either one or two of these to combine the ingredients effectively. Because we're not using a mixer, I've often written the recipes to tag team a wooden spoon or spatula with a whisk to get the right consistency. I recommend a solid, long-handled wooden spoon, a large whisk, and a large, firm but flexible rubber spatula (I find the hard, inflexible spatulas frustrating when scraping bowls). A rubber spatula is not only great for stirring, but perfect for scraping every bit of the delicious batter into the pan.

## Pastry blender

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A good pastry blender is a priceless tool for one-bowl baking. For recipes like scones and biscuits, the hand-gripped tool has wires to "cut" cold butter into tiny pieces as it blends into the dry ingredients. Unlike a spoon, which just smashes and creams the butter into the flour, a pastry blender keeps the

butter-flour mixture fluffy, resulting in a light, tender, pastry. This tool is not what you might think. While I remember my great-grandmother's old wooden-handled pastry blender with thin wires being rather tedious to use, forcing her to cut butter into the flour using two knives (yikes!), these days you can get a solid pastry cutter with sharp enough blades to require very little effort. Cutting in butter is a snap.

## Wire rack

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Most desserts are cooled on a wire rack. The airflow beneath the rack helps the pan to cool. Once the cake or pastry is turned out onto the rack to finish cooling, the breathable surface allows the moisture to escape from the bottom of the pastry, which helps to keep it from getting soggy. I find it practical to have a rack that's large enough to hold two 9-inch cake layers.

## Baking pans

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There are numerous pan sizes used throughout this book. Most are standard. For cookies, I like to use a heavy-duty 18 x 12-inch (half-sheet) rimmed baking sheet. Muffins and cupcakes require a standard muffin pan with twelve cups. For bar cookies, snack cakes, and other desserts, I use an 8-inch square Pyrex baking dish, a 9-inch square pan, and a 13 x 9-inch baking pan. For round cakes, I used a 9-inch, 8-inch, and 6-inch round pans, as well as a 12-cup Bundt pan, and a tube pan with a removable bottom. For cheesecakes and tarts, I used a 9-inch springform and a 9-inch fluted tart pan with one-inch sides. If you'd like to remove the tart from the pan to serve, make sure it has a removable bottom. A muffin top pan, which has shallow, wide cups, works great to create the Corn Muffin Toaster Cakes ([page 32](#)). Other dishes include a cast iron skillet and shallow casserole dishes. I generally stick to non-stick pans. These are especially useful for times when the pan isn't greased, which is the case when stirring together a "mix-in-the-pan" recipe such as a Wacky Cake ([pages 133, 136](#)). The wide variety of pans used throughout this book come in handy when planning a menu, enabling you to quickly bake an assortment of pastries.

## Pan liners

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Even if using non-stick pans, I always recommend lining the bottoms of the round cake pans and tube pans with parchment paper to make sure your cakes make it out of the pan. You can purchase parchment circles in cake supply stores, or make them yourself by tracing the shape of the pan onto a sheet of parchment paper, then cutting it out with scissors. Foil will also work, though it's not as easy to cut. Non-disposable silicone cake pan liners are another option. Don't line the pans for cakes that you may be serving directly from the pan, such as cheesecakes or flourless cakes.

## Cupcake liners

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I much prefer deep cupcake liners to the standard size because the paper comes right up to the edge of the cups in my muffin tin. This helps to prevent the muffin or cupcake from spilling over and sticking

to the pan. Foil cupcake liners are usually double layered (foil layer and paper layer). To get more usage out of a pack, I separate the two layers and use both.

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## Pastry bags and tips, spatulas

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While you can frost any of the cupcakes or cakes with a spoon or spatula, owning a pastry bag and a few different pastry tips can take your cupcake and cake decorating to the next level. With just a little piping, a cake or cupcake can be transformed into a polished and professional-looking treat. A 16-inch pastry bag, along with both a plain round tip and a star tip, is enough to get you started. In a pinch, a gallon-size zipper lock bag with a corner snipped off can also do the job, with or without a pastry tip. A set of metal cake spatulas are incredibly useful for smoothing frosting over cakes and cupcakes. I have two that I use all the time: a straight-edged 10-inch spatula for smoothing on large piles of frosting, and a small 6-inch offset (the blade is angled) to frost cupcakes.

## Cake wheel

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My first cake wheel was one of the most exciting things I've ever purchased. A cake wheel makes frosting and decorating layer cakes a breeze. This tool allows the cake to spin, allowing the spatula to effortlessly glide frosting over the top and sides of the cake, with incredibly smooth results. Though you do not need a cake wheel to frost a cake beautifully (my great-grandmother never had one), it's a great investment. Always place the first cake layer on a cardboard cake circle or serving plate *before* placing the cake on the cake wheel. It's way too stressful (not to mention almost impossible) to attempt to transfer a finished cake from one surface to another.

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Place a silicone mat or damp paper towels between the cake plate and the surface of the cake wheel to keep it from sliding as you spin the wheel.

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## Egg beater

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Though it's not required to mix any of the recipes, an egg beater deserves a mention, especially when we're talking about not having to plug in or drag out big appliances. This wonderful tool is generally overlooked these days, but it's an ideal tool for whipping cream, making it much easier than whipping by hand or setting up a mixer if you've only got a small amount to whip. Chill the beater and the bowl for even easier whipping, and use a deep bowl to keep the cream from splattering.

## Oven thermometer

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An oven thermometer is an especially useful tool because it helps you know that your oven is at the right temperature—an important factor in successful baking (I've got three in my oven but I'm crazy like that).

## Bench scraper

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Also known by names such as a dough scraper, bench knife, or dough cutter, this simple tool is like a pastry chef's third hand. Usually made of a sheet of stainless steel with a handle, it's the perfect tool for cutting scones, scooping up chopped chocolate, nuts, or fruit, or scraping up scraps of dough. A bench scraper is also terrific for cleaning up extra flour from your work surface before wiping it clean.

## Miscellaneous tools

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A few additional items also help to make baking easier. A *retractable scooper* makes life a lot easier for scooping muffin or cupcake batter into cups, and for portioning equal pieces of cookie dough. I like to use a 1-ounce (2 tablespoon) scooper for most of the cookie recipes. A *sifter* (or fine mesh strainer) will get those lumps out of cocoa powder or confectioners' sugar before it goes in the bowl and makes dusting the tops of cakes a snap. *Toothpicks* and *long skewers* are my best friend for testing the doneness of deep cakes, because simply tapping the top of the cake is not a foolproof way to know if it's baked through in the center. When it comes to zesting citrus fruits, I used to live in fear as zesting always meant a finger casualty on the box grater—until I discovered a *Microplane® bar grater*, which makes zesting a total breeze. Another super tool to keep in your kitchen drawer? A *ruler*. Not having to guess a length or depth of dough will make baking that much smoother. And last but not least, a *cake server*! Serve up your pretty cake or tart easily and in style.

## KNOW YOUR INGREDIENTS

Let's get acquainted with the baking ingredients that will be going into your bowl. Knowing what to purchase, how to use, and how to store your ingredients will help your sweet treats be the best they can be. Knowing just when you can and can't substitute ingredients will guide you in a pinch or ingredient emergency. Almost all of the ingredients in this book can be easily located at your local supermarket.

## Flour and grains

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Most baked foods contain flour to give the pastry both body and structure. Two flours are used in this book: unbleached all-purpose flour and cake flour. These two flours differ in their strengths, which is the power they have to hold a pastry together. This is measured by the protein content. Protein contents can differ by brands, but generally stay within a range set out for that particular type of flour. All-purpose flour, with about 10 to 12 percent protein content, is the stronger of the two, and is a good basic flour that works well in cookies, cupcakes, quickbreads, and many cakes. Cake flour has less protein, at about 7 to 8 percent, is finer and softer, and is used when you want to produce a baked good that's especially tender and fine textured, such as a delicate cake. Cake flour is most often found unbleached. Avoid self-raising flours, which already contain leaveners in the mix, as these will not work with the recipes in this book. Store flour in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

The recipes in *One Bowl Baking* have been specifically formulated for either cake or all-purpose



flour, and shouldn't be swapped. If you find yourself in an emergency where you need all-purpose flour, you can try swapping in cake flour by weight, not by cup. If it's cake flour that you need, replace 2 tablespoons in a cup of all-purpose flour with cornstarch (or add 2 tablespoons cornstarch to 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> ounces or 130 grams all-purpose flour) and then sift several times before using. Please note that the texture will not be quite the same as with the correct flour, but it's certainly better than saying no to a last minute craving for chocolate cake!

## Sugar

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Sugar not only sweetens a baked good, but helps to make it tender and moist. Store granulated sugar and confectioners' sugar, well-sealed, in a cool, dry place. Brown sugar, on the other hand, is vulnerable to drying out into a hard brick, so I double seal it to keep the moisture in: seal the original package and then pop it in an airtight plastic container. Confectioners' sugar often has lumps, which are very difficult to get out of a frosting or batter. To save yourself time, sift the bag of sugar into an airtight container ahead of time, so that you're not whisking like mad to get the lumps out later.

## Eggs

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I use large eggs for the recipes in this book. If you have any doubt over the size of your egg, you can check its weight on a scale. A large egg will weigh around 2 ounces (57 grams) with the shell. For most cakes, I like to have my eggs at room temperature to create a smooth batter. With other recipes, such as cookies, you can just grab a handful right out of the fridge.

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To freeze leftover egg whites, I like to freeze each one separately so that I can easily retrieve the right amount when I bake my next recipe. Set aside a special "egg ice cube tray," drop an egg white in each space, and freeze. When firm, pop them out and store in a freezer safe bag, making sure to press out all of the air. To avoid any off flavors from the freezer, store the frozen egg whites a maximum of 2 months. To defrost, set the cubes in a container and let thaw in the fridge.

Yolks, on the other hand, are trickier to freeze because they don't defrost smoothly, which creates little specks of hard yolk that won't blend into a batter. To help keep this from happening, I like to stir a touch of corn syrup into my leftover yolks before freezing and then freeze them in very small containers. When I want to use them, I defrost a container and use 1 tablespoon for each egg yolk that I need. I find defrosted yolks are best saved for cookies, chocolate recipes, or scones, where any bits of yellow usually go unnoticed.

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## Butter and oil

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Though I can't resist slathering salted butter on top of corn muffins or pancakes, I *only* bake with unsalted butter. This is because for salted butter, brand to brand, the percentage of salt can vary, which may throw off the flavor of a recipe. If all you've got is salted butter in the house and you want

bake, consider cutting some (or all) of the salt called for in the recipe. I never use margarine in baking, as it's salted and processed, and I find the strong flavor overwhelming.

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For oil, I use either canola or vegetable. Other oils may impart an off flavor. Keep oil stored in a cool, dry place, or in the fridge. Oil can go rancid after some time, especially if not stored properly. In doubt, use your nose. It should be just about odorless.

To grease my pans, I use either butter or a non-stick pan spray, depending on what I have on hand. Sometimes I'll slick the pan with vegetable oil if it's all I've got.

## Dairy

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I use whole milk. Low-fat or skim can be subbed but the results will be less rich. Unless specified in the recipe, milk can be used right out of the fridge. I usually use room temperature milk for cakes and cupcakes, to keep the batter smooth, because cold milk can sometimes chill down the butter in the bowl, causing the batter to separate. Cream cheese should be room temperature to make mixing by hand easy to do and lump free (tiny lumps of cream cheese in a batter are almost impossible to blend in). If you find yourself with a lot of lumps, smear them against the side of the bowl with a rubber spatula to smooth the batter out. My last resort is to press the batter through a mesh strainer, which works like a charm.

Buttermilk often comes in larger containers than I'd normally use before it spoils, and sometimes isn't easily available, but this is an easy fix. Leftover fresh buttermilk can be frozen and then thawed (I freeze it in ½-cup portions for easy measuring later). Powdered buttermilk is great to keep on hand in the pantry to reconstitute when you need it. And you can always make your own, which is really quite easy.

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To make your own buttermilk, place 1 tablespoon of white vinegar into a 1-cup (240-mL) measuring cup and fill with either whole or low-fat milk. Let it sit at room temperature until it thickens slightly, about 20 minutes.

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## Leaveners

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Other than eggs, leaveners will help a pastry rise in the oven. Baking soda, or sodium bicarbonate, works by releasing bubbles when it reacts with a liquid and an acid, causing the batter to rise. Because it needs an acid to work, most recipes with baking soda also include an acid-containing ingredient, such as sour cream, buttermilk, brown sugar, molasses, or cocoa. Baking soda begins to react as soon as it's mixed into the batter, so be sure to get the batter in the oven promptly, before the baking soda peters out.

Baking powder is a mixture of both baking soda and an acid all in one. Most baking powders are sold as double acting, which is great because they contain two acids, one which reacts with the liquid in the batter, and one which reacts with the heat of the oven. Because of this trait, there are many baking powder batters that I'll mix ahead of time (such as a muffin or chocolate cake batter), and the

bake the next day. If I do this, I always wait to add any fruit to the batter just before baking. Never substitute baking soda for baking powder (or vice versa) in a recipe, or the rise, flavor, and browning will be way, way off. Store both in a cool, dry place and keep an eye on expiration dates, since they can both lose potency after a while.

## Chocolate

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Hands down, this is my favorite ingredient. I always buy extra so I have plenty to snack on while I'm working with it. If there is any ingredient on this list that can change the flavor or texture of a recipe based on the type or brand used, chocolate is it. Both the flavor and quality of sweetened chocolate can vary tremendously from brand to brand. To bake the best chocolate dessert possible, always use good quality chocolate. My best gauge for that is this: If I wouldn't want to eat it straight, I probably don't want to bake with it. For the best and easiest to find store-bought brand bittersweet chocolate, I recommend Ghirardelli® 60% bar chocolate and chips. This chocolate makes a luscious ganache, and the chips have a nice deep chocolate flavor that's not too sweet. If you want to splurge on an artisan chocolate, I'd save it for where it will stand out the most, such as in a frosting, chopping into chunks for a cookie, or as a garnish for a cake, cupcake, or tart. For both milk and white chocolate, I recommend Ghirardelli® or Cadbury®.

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When it comes to making a ganache, a mixture of chocolate and cream, the type of chocolate used can really affect the outcome. Try to stick with what is called for in the recipe. For example, a 60% chocolate may result in a smooth and creamy ganache, but a 70% will be thick and chalky, and a chocolate with a high percentage of cocoa butter may give you a bowl of ganache that is too soupy to use. Generally, 60% bittersweet is used throughout the book.

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Unsweetened chocolate is pretty straightforward and I use brands interchangeably (the taste rule does not apply). For cocoa powder, I use both a natural cocoa powder, such as Hershey's® brand, and Dutch processed cocoa, which has been treated with an alkali to neutralize the acid in the cocoa. The two kinds are slightly different, so don't substitute one for the other.

## Heating Methods for Chocolate

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Melting chocolate is a frequent step in this book, particularly to make ganaches. There are two ways to do this: the first is to set the chocolate in your bowl with any other ingredients that are to be melted with it (such as cream or butter) then place it over a pan of barely simmering water. Avoid letting the bowl touch the water to keep it from getting too hot (which will scorch the chocolate). This is a good basic method for melting chocolate because you've got control over the heat, and because you can use an all-purpose metal bowl.

Alternatively, you can heat the chocolate in the microwave—just be sure you're using a microwave-safe bowl, such as a Pyrex®. Check and stir the chocolate every five to ten seconds, or it can burn. To be safe, set on reduced power, such as fifty percent.

Whichever method you use, the key is to not let your chocolate get too hot. Make sure the chocolate is finely chopped; the chocolate will melt more quickly this way. It's also important not to whisk the mixture too vigorously as it's melting, or for too long—this could cause your ganache to break (you'll know this is happening if the ganache starts to look oily). If the ganache does begin to separate, try whisking in a small amount of cream to bring it back (and this time, whisking vigorously is what I do, as well as crossing my fingers).

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Note: To truly call this one-bowl baking, I encourage you to use the same bowl throughout the recipe. At times it's okay to proceed directly to the next part of the recipe with just a wipe of the bowl in between—but if a batter has contained eggs, I strongly suggest washing the bowl before embarking on a frosting or topping that isn't going to be cooked.

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Sometimes you'll come across “bloomed chocolate” when you open a package. This will be obvious straight away because the chocolate will have a dusty white appearance. This can sometimes happen if the chocolate gets too warm at some point during storage, which causes some of the cocoa butter to rise to the surface. Don't worry—it's harmless, so don't toss it. The texture might not be nice for eating out of hand, but it's fine for baking.

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## Fruits

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While a few recipes call for packaged fruit, such as canned pineapple or jarred cherries, for most of the recipes I use fresh, ripe fruit. Always wash and dry your fruit, and try to avoid chopping it up too far in advance or the cut parts of fruits such as apples and peaches will oxidize from exposure to the air, and turn brown. When I make a batter to use the next day, I wait to add the fruit until just before baking.

## Nuts

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The oils in nuts are vulnerable to turning rancid. Ideally, store nuts well-sealed in the fridge or freezer. This will keep them fresh for as long as possible.

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If you want to add a little extra flavor to the nuts before baking or sprinkling on top of a cake, lightly toast them first. Lightly crisp in either a 350°F (180°C) oven, toaster oven, or gently heated in a skillet for a few minutes until fragrant. You can even toast up a large batch ahead of time and then freeze to store.

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## Flavorings

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I use table salt for the recipes in this book. I find the fine grains will dissolve more readily into quick mixed batters than larger Kosher salt crystals. If you choose to use Kosher salt, the general

substitution is 1 teaspoon Kosher salt for ½ teaspoon table salt. A few recipes suggest as garnish sprinkle of large crystal or flaky sea salt on top for extra flavor.

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I like to use pure almond extract and pure vanilla extract when I bake. For some recipes where know the flavor of the vanilla will really stand out, such as a vanilla frosting or custard, I often add the seeds from vanilla beans. The crunchy vanilla bean seeds give off a terrifically sweet, heady aroma and flavor. Purchase soft, plump beans if you can locate them, wrap well and store in the freezer. To reap the seeds, slice the vanilla bean lengthwise and use a paring knife to scrape the tiny black seeds and pulp from the inside of the bean. I like to store the leftover vanilla bean skin in my sugar or brown sugar to add extra flavor. Because vanilla beans are pricey, I wouldn't bother adding them to chocolate or spiced recipes, as these flavors are too strong to give the vanilla a chance.

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Whole vanilla beans can usually be found in jars in the spice section of the supermarket, in gourmet specialty shops, and in the refrigerator or freezer of many baking supply shops.

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Store all spices in a cool, dry place. Avoid buying any spice in bulk unless you bake with it often. The flavors of spices do mellow and go stale after a while. Be sure to smell your spices if you suspect they've been hibernating in your cupboard. If you can't tell what it is by the smell of it, or it's musty, it's time for a new one. Write the date on the new container as soon as you open.

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Citrus zest adds a wonderful fresh, bright aroma and flavor to baked goods. Whether it's an orange, grapefruit, lemon, or lime, be sure to only grate off the colorful outer skin. The white "pith" that's just below is rather bitter, so avoid scraping too deep.

## ONE-BOWL MIXING

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In baking, mixing up a batter or dough generally follows one of several mixing methods, such as the biscuit method, muffin method, or creaming method. Each of these methods helps to deliver a specific texture to the baked good. For example, the crumbly texture of a scone (biscuit method) is different from a moist muffin (muffin method), which is different from a light and fluffy cake (creaming method). Often, the recipes for these methods have been written to make use of a mixer, food processor, or multiple bowls. With one bowl baking, traditional mixing steps are simply condensed into an easy one-bowl, hand-mixed procedure.

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*So, is one-bowl baking just dumping and stirring?*

No. The method of mixing in one-bowl baking is similar to a "dump and stir" mixing method—where all of the ingredients are placed into one bowl and mixed—except one-bowl recipes are more nuanced. Ingredients are added and mixed in the bowl in an order, and in a specific way, depending on what is being made.

*Does one-bowl baking work for all recipes?*



No. There are recipes which do benefit from an electric mixer—recipes that would be really difficult to replicate by hand (without wearing your arm out): for instance, a reverse creamed cake or super light and airy cakes such as sponge cakes, chiffon cakes, and angel food cakes. For proper texture and lift, these cakes rely on lots and lots of air being incorporated into the batter or eggs. For now, I'm happy to leave that to the mixers.

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