



Desserts & Baking

Sweet ideas, pastries, bakes
and dessert inspiration.

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Baking Foundations



Great desserts begin with accuracy, temperature and timing.

- Weigh ingredients whenever possible - baking is less forgiving than savoury cooking.
- Read the full method before starting and prepare tins, trays and equipment first.
- Bring butter, eggs or dairy to the temperature the recipe requires.
- Preheat the oven fully before baking.
- Avoid opening the oven repeatedly during the first part of the bake.

Accuracy gives you consistency. Consistency gives you confidence.

TEXTURE, RISE AND MOISTURE

Better Cakes

Key cake principles

- Cream butter and sugar properly when the method calls for aeration.
- Add eggs gradually to reduce the chance of the mixture splitting.
- Fold flour gently once added - overmixing can make cakes tough.
- Check doneness near the centre, not just around the edge.
- Cool fully before filling or icing.



Chef tip

For cleaner layers, chill the cake before trimming and assembling. A cold cake is easier to level and less likely to tear.

Keep fillings balanced - richness often benefits from fruit, citrus or a little acidity.

Pastry Basics



Pastry rewards a light touch.

- Keep butter and dough cool to protect texture.
- Do not overwork pastry once the flour is added.
- Rest pastry before rolling to reduce shrinkage.
- Roll evenly so the base and sides bake at the same rate.
- Blind-bake when a crisp shell is needed for a wet filling.

Cold hands, rested dough and an even bake make a cleaner pastry case.

SMOOTH TEXTURE WITHOUT SPLITTING

Creams, Custards & Mousse

Control the temperature

- Heat custards gently and stir constantly around the base and corners.
- Temper eggs gradually when adding hot liquid.
- Strain custards for a smoother professional finish.
- Allow cooked bases to cool before folding in whipped cream.
- Fold mousse carefully to keep as much air as possible.



Texture check

Custard should be smooth and glossy.
Mousse should feel light but still hold its shape. If either becomes grainy, the mixture may have been overheated or overworked.

Chocolate & Caramel

Chocolate

- Avoid water entering melted chocolate - even a small amount can cause it to seize.
- Melt gently rather than using aggressive heat.
- For a glossy finish, allow ganache to cool slightly before using.
- Balance very rich chocolate desserts with salt, fruit or acidity.

Caramel

- Use a clean pan and avoid stirring dry caramel once it begins colouring.
- Watch colour closely - caramel can move from golden to burnt quickly.
- Add warm cream carefully because hot caramel will bubble violently.
- A small amount of salt can sharpen flavour without making it taste salty.

With sugar work, colour is your timing guide.

MAKE EVERY ELEMENT EARN ITS PLACE

Dessert Plating



A strong dessert plate should have contrast.

- Combine soft, crisp and creamy textures where they complement each other.
- Use sauce with control - dots, lines or a clean pool can be enough.
- Keep garnish edible and connected to the flavour of the dessert.
- Use fresh fruit for colour and brightness when appropriate.
- Leave negative space so the plate feels intentional rather than crowded.

A simple plate with three well-executed components often looks stronger than a plate overloaded with decoration.

BEFORE YOU SERVE

Dessert & Baking Checklist

- ☐ Were the ingredients weighed accurately?
- ☐ Was the oven fully preheated?
- ☐ Is the bake cooked through without becoming dry?
- ☐ Has the cake, pastry or custard cooled enough before finishing?
- ☐ Are the flavours balanced - not simply sweet?
- ☐ Is there enough texture contrast?
- ☐ Does every garnish have a purpose?
- ☐ Is the plate clean and visually balanced?
- ☐ Would you happily serve it to a paying guest?

Bake accurately. Finish cleanly. Keep refining.

Free Desserts & Baking Guide - By Raymond Goldhawk

For educational and culinary inspiration.