

PREPARING BAKED FOODS EXHIBITS FOR THE FAIR

* Read the fair book. It has a lot of basic information about classes, requirements, rules, etc. For answers to other questions, contact your project leader or call the Extension Office. Each item will need an entry card. Follow the directions for completing this item.

* Select several recipes to try. Make the recipe several times so you know how the product turns out. Like all new skills, practice is necessary to learn and to improve and get consistent results. You will then know if you (or your family) like it and if it is something that you can use to build your skills in food preparation.

* Choose your foods exhibit entry based on what you want to learn as part of the 4-H project. Do not choose an item for the judge or for what you think the judge will like. Judges are chosen for their ability to be fair and objective and not to use personal likes and dislikes in judging. Food products are judged according to standards for texture, shape, crumb, crust, etc.

* Use time management skills in planning your foods exhibits. Bake items ahead of time and freeze them. After baking bread, rolls, cookies, etc. remove them from pans and cool to room temperature. Place in plastic freezer bags or wrap with freezer wrap paper. Remove excess air. To thaw, leave in original wrapper at room temperature or in the refrigerator. This will help preserve the moisture in the products. Allow time for food to completely thaw. Small items like cookies, biscuits, muffins, etc. take less than 1 hour. Large and heavier items like cakes and bread can take up to 3 hours. Do not freeze frosted items (the frosting will crack) or cupcakes baked in paper liners (these will turn loose in the freezer.)

* It is always a good idea to bring a copy of the recipe along, even if the rules don't ask for it. That way if any questions come up, you can refer to your recipe. (Our rules do require recipes.)

* In conference judging, the judge will visit with you about your project. This is not a test. You should answer the best you can by yourself! Here are some things to know:

*Name, age, level, number of years in foods project

*Know the types of ingredients you used:

Flour - cake flour, all purpose, bread flour, whole wheat, self rising, etc.

Type of Fat - vegetable shortening, lard, butter, margarine, oil, etc.

Flavoring - vanilla, almond, lemon, etc.

Sugar type - brown, white/granular, powdered/confectioners, etc.

Nuts - pecans, peanuts, walnuts, etc.

* Be able to describe how you mixed and prepared the recipe.

* Know basic terms like: cream, sift, powder, beat, rise, etc.

* Basic nutrition of the product: calories, fat, sodium, food group.

* What new skills did you learn in making this product?

* Cost of ingredients for one recipe (batch).

* How would you change it in the future? For example: bake it longer, use a different size pan, change the flavorings, reduce the fat or sugar, etc.

* What did you like best about making this product? What was the most difficult part?

* You may want to choose to improve the nutritional content of your recipe by adjusting fat and sugar. Generally, you can reduce the fat and/or sugar by 25% in most recipes. Other recipe modifications include: using egg substitute or egg whites only, replacing ½ the oil with applesauce, use buttermilk instead of whole milk or substituting 1/4 to ½ the flour with whole wheat flour.

* Exhibitors are responsible for the presentation of the food items. This is the showmanship part of the foods project.

* Never use old Styrofoam meat or poultry trays for displaying food products. These trays could contain salmonella bacteria which could lead to food poisoning.

HINTS AND HELPS FOR BAKED PRODUCTS

Cookies

There are 5 basic types of cookies -- rolled, dropped, refrigerator, pressed and bar cookies. Rolled cookies are made from a stiff dough that is rolled out to a desired thickness and cut into various shapes. Dropped cookies are made from a soft dough that is dropped from a spoon or dipper onto a cookie sheet. Refrigerator cookies are made from a rich dough which has been shaped into a roll, thoroughly chilled, and then is sliced and baked. Pressed cookies are made from a rich, stiff dough extruded through a decorative tube. Bar cookies are baked in a shallow pan and cut into bars when cool.

1. Make sure the cookies are all the same size. To test for this, put 2 cookies together, matching the flat, bottom sides. Look to see if one is larger than the other. Keep comparing until you come up with cookies that are as close as possible to the same size.
2. Check to make sure that they are the same "brownness." You don't want one that is almost burnt and one that is not done. Different cookie sheets bake differently. The darker the baking sheet the darker your cookie will be. Bright shiny pans reflect the heat more evenly. The cookies you choose to exhibit should be as alike as possible. Uniformity is important in food products.
3. Bar cookies or brownies are cut into serving size pieces. Use a ruler to make sure you get them the same size. 2" x 2" or 2" x 3" is an average serving size. Make sure that the edges all look the same. Don't take some from the middle and some from the edge because then some will have crust and some won't. Take them all from the center or all from a side edge.
4. For even drop cookies, use a small ice cream dipper (size 20?) to dip cookie dough onto cookies sheets. This makes them the same size and it's easy to do. Speciality food stores sell them for about \$6-7.
5. Cookies spread if they are too close together on the cookie sheet; dough is too soft; dough is placed on a hot baking sheet. Cookies made with butter or margarine tend to spread more.

Cakes

1. For layer cakes, line the bottom of the pan with waxed paper. To do this, place pan on top of waxed paper and with a paring knife, trace around the outside edge. This will leave a marking line. Cut along the line with scissors. Place the cut out in the bottom of the pan. Neither the paper nor the pan have to be greased or floured. After baking, cool cake slightly, turn it out on a cloth, and peel the paper off the bottom of the cake.
2. Freeze layer cakes individually before frosting. When ready to frost, take out and frost while still frozen. This makes less crumbs in the frosting and cakes are easier to handle.
3. For an even raising cake, pour batter into prepared pans. Gently tap the pan on the counter top 2 or 3 times. This will take care of any large air holes and also even out the batter. Be careful -- if you do this too hard your cake may not rise!!!
4. For entry at the fair, put cakes on a piece of foil covered cardboard. Try using a round pizza cardboard insert for round cakes. Cut the cardboard down to size to fit your cake. The cardboard should be no more than 1" larger than your cake. Excess cardboard makes it difficult to fit in to the plastic bag and it takes up extra space. Cardboard is preferred over a paper plate, because a paper plate does not give enough support to hold the cake firmly.
5. Put the cake in a food grade, plastic bag. Do not cover with plastic wrap as this makes it too difficult to unwrap and re-wrap for the food sale. Do not use garbage bags as these are not food safe. You can sometimes find 2 gallon "Baggies" which are a nice size for large products. Or use the large, turkey cooking bags. The presentation of your product is part of your responsibility as an exhibitor.
6. To keep a plastic bag from sticking to the cake, cut a drinking straw into fourths. Place straws around the top of the cake. Put in plastic bag and then blow air into the bag. Close with twist tie.
7. Know which side is right! Foam and chiffon cakes are exhibited with top crust showing...like it is baked in the pan. When putting together layer cakes, the "bottoms go together" so that you have a level middle and a rounded top.
8. Cupcakes are baked and exhibited in the paper liners. Choose cupcakes that are the same height -- not too pointy like mountains and not too flat. To make it easy to fill cupcakes, use an ice cream scoop or measuring cup. Try to get the right amount in the first time. If you go back and add more batter later, it can cause uneven rising.
9. A common problem with cupcakes is "peaks" that look like mountains. This can be caused by: filling the pan too full; over mixing the batter; or oven temperature too high. Another problem is when the batter was dropped from a spoon held too high up from the pan. This causes the dough to "splat" and knock out all the cells of air.
10. When frosting a 2 layer cake, leave a spot the size of a quarter unfrosted in the middle of your first layer. Put the second layer on top. The cake will stick to itself in the center and be less likely to slide off the cake and run down the sides.
11. Use a hydrogenated vegetable shortening (like Crisco) not butter or margarine for frosting for the fair. Shortening has a higher melting point and won't run in the summer heat!

Here is a basic "hot, fair weather" frosting recipe:

½ c. Shortening	1 lb. (4 c.) Confectioner's sugar
1 t. Vanilla or other flavoring	3 T. Milk

Blend the shortening and sugar together. Add the vanilla and flavoring. Stir until smooth. Makes about 2 ½ c. frosting or enough for 2 - 9" layer cakes. (Note: for chocolate frosting, add about 1/3 c. cocoa powder and a little more milk.)

12. Whipped topping frosting, cooked filled frostings (like German Chocolate Cake frostings) and cooked custard fillings are not acceptable when refrigeration is not provided.

Quick Breads

Food items in this category are breads that do not use yeast. This includes loaf breads like strawberry bread, banana bread, coffee cakes, etc. This category also includes biscuits and muffins.

1. If you have a thick ridge around a loaf of quick bread, this is called a “fry line.” It means that you have greased the pan too much. Cut back on the amount; try doing the bottom only; try a non-stick vegetable spray.
2. If the outside of the bread has a gray color and a solid, slick feel to the crust, you probably used too much flour when you greased and floured your pan. Cut back on the amount.
3. Quick breads have a tendency to crack down the center. This is because they are a heavy, dense batter. Generally the richer the nut bread (one with more sugar and fat) the less the crack. The less sugar and fat in the recipe, the larger the crack.
4. If the quick bread is browning too much in the center, pour the batter in the pan and then make a slight “trough” down the center, gently pushing the dough towards the corners and outside edges.
5. If the quick bread is browning too much on top, loosely shield the top with aluminum foil. To test for doneness, insert a tooth pick in the center. If it is “gooey” when you remove it, continue baking. If it comes out clean or with crumbs, it’s done.
6. Loaves of quick breads should be displayed on a rectangular shaped, foil covered cardboard.
7. Plain muffins are usually baked without the paper liners. Dessert/sweet/fruit muffins are usually baked with paper liners.
8. If using walnuts, pecans, etc. taste one before putting them in the batter. Nuts can become rancid and they give a really bad flavor to your bread.
9. For banana bread, use really ripe, black, squishy bananas. They will give more flavor and a moister product. If you are a little short of bananas, use applesauce to make up the difference.
10. To keep nuts, raisins, and dried fruits from “sinking” to the bottom of the pan, coat them lightly with a little bit of flour. The flour will “stick” to the batter and they will stay more evenly distributed in the batter.
11. Big holes or tunnels inside quick breads indicate too much mixing.

Yeast Breads

1. For exhibit purposes, it is not recommended to butter the top of a loaf of bread or rolls. Butter can give a rancid off flavor, especially if it is not really fresh. Adding butter to the top of the crust also adds a greasy texture to the crust. So it’s OK to do this at home for your family, but not for fair competition.
2. Choose yeast rolls that are the same height, size, and shape. Check the bottom for even brownness. When selecting pan rolls or cinnamon rolls, use those all from the edges or all from the center, so that they look alike.
3. A bulged and cracked crust could mean that: the dough is too stiff (too much flour); uneven heat during baking; or insufficiently proofed.
4. A crust that is too thick is generally caused by an oven that bakes too slowly.
5. A streaked crust or loaf means that too much flour was added during the shaping process. **Hint:** if the dough is a little bit sticky, lightly spray the counter and/or hands with a non-stick cooking spray.

Foam Cakes

These cakes characteristically contain a large proportion of eggs or egg whites and they are leavened by steam and air. They are baked in an ungreased tube pan.

1. Sticky crusts are caused by too much sugar or not baked long enough.
2. A tough crust is a sign of over mixing or baking at too low of a temperature.
3. A dry cake may be caused by: over beating egg whites; too much flour, and baking too long.
4. A heavy cake usually means that the eggs are not beaten enough or the air was lost during the mixing process (over mixed).
5. If the cake is shrunken it may mean that the temperature was too low; not enough cream of tartar and not baked long enough.

For additional information on these and other food products, consult these resources:

4-H Foods and Nutrition Curriculum Notebook
Judge's Guide for Baked Foods, KSU, June 1984 (4-H 488)

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Recipes are required for all exhibits. Please include 2 - one for judge and one for Food Sale Buyer.

As a good will gesture to your buyers, please have a recipe to accompany the food you sell.

FOODS CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Name _____

Product/Class _____

Date _____

Ribbons: P B R W

Points to Consider	Not all points apply to every food		Comments:
	DESIRABLE	UNDESIRABLE	
Opportunities for improved Nutritive Value	Low in fat Low in sodium Low in sugar High in fiber Portion size Other	High in fat High in sodium High in sugar Low in fiber Portion size Other	
Appearance	Light or appropriate weight Characteristic color Good volume Characteristic shape Uniform size Creative, appealing, attractive No flour streaks or excess flour Consistent mixing	Heavy in weight Pale, Dark, off-color Low volume, shrunken, compact Uneven/uncharacteristic shape Size not uniform Dull, unappealing, unattractive Flour streaks	
Temperature or doneness	Cooked properly Appropriate temperature	Undercooked or overcooked Too warm or too cool	
Aroma	Appealing, characteristic for product Pleasing	Unappealing, uncharacteristic product	
Flavor	Appropriate flavor for product Flavor compatible No chemical flavor Fresh Pleasant flavor Well blended	No flavor, unappealing Ingredient flavors incompatible Bitter, over-leavened Rancid Off-flavor Not blended properly	
Texture or Consistency	Tender, soft crumb Smooth mouthfeel Moist Proper consistency Pieces/chunks proper size Holds together Small, soft, even cell structure Flaky Not sticky or gummy Clear	Tough, coarse crumb Lumpy mouthfeel Dry Runny/Thick consistency Pieces/chunks too large or small Crumbly Large, tough, uneven cell structure Soggy Sticky, gummy Cloudy	

WHAT THE JUDGE LOOKS FOR...IN FOODS”

(Notes from the meeting in Kensington.)

Products are judged against a “standard” or “ideal” food product in 4-H. They are not judged “against” each other. Each item is evaluated on it’s own merit.

Exhibitors should take care to present themselves as well as their product. Make sure that you take time to:

- Comb your hair
- Wash your hands, especially under the fingernails!!
- Change clothes, if you have been out cleaning animal pens
- Have a general overall, neat and clean appearance

Sources of recipes -

Check with basic cookbooks like Betty Crocker, Better Homes and Gardens, Joy of Cooking, etc for basic, tested standard type recipes.

Community and family favorites are options too. But remember that these may have some typographical errors, or vague directions that may need some interpretation. Younger 4-H members may need some assistance in making these recipes for the first time.

The Kansas Wheat Commission also is a good source of tested recipes

For foods for beginning students, try:

- Alphabakery --- Gold Medal Cookbook
- PO Box 5401, Dept 836
- Minneapolis, MN 55460
- Cost: \$2

Read the fair book for rules and follow those guidelines. Know the entry times and be there on time.

Most of the time, food items are not displayed in the pan. However, if the rules allow, then you may do so. If the rules don’t specify, then it’s best to take the product out of the pan (When in doubt, take it out!). When trying to make this decision, think about what you would do if you take this exhibit to the state fair. Would you send it in a pan or not???? Note: Pies would be the exception to the rule as they need to be in a pan.

Some people have asked about whether or not there should be cooling rack marks on the bottom of breads. Most judges don’t count down on this. However, if you want to try to eliminate them, place a “flour sack type” tea towel over the rack and then place the food item on it. Also try to put the food item on the rack straight so that if there are marks, they line up with the product.

If your food product has been frozen, be sure to tell the judge. Sometimes freezing will slightly change the texture of the crust -- especially on yeast breads, which may appear more “wrinkled”. Make sure to thaw it properly and make sure it’s completely thawed before it’s judged.

Always use fresh ingredients. Spices can wear out and loose their flavor. Shortening, margarine, wheat germ, nuts, etc., can become rancid with storage.

Preparing baking pans --- Follow the recipe directions. It says “ungreased” that means that there is enough fat in the product to keep it from sticking to the pan. If you add more, you will get a “fry line” around breads, cookies, etc. It’s best to use solid shortening when greasing pans. Margarine, butter, oil and cooking sprays all have a lower melting point and this will cause the food to brown too quickly and get over done on the edges. One exception may be bundt pans. These seem to work better with a cooking spray or oil. (We just don’t know why!) Some recipes will also call for sprinkling the pan with granulated sugar. This does form a slight glaze or crust and you have to be careful that it doesn’t caramelize.

When greasing the pan, use a small piece of a paper towel, so that you can remove any excess shortening. If you just use your finger, you can’t get rid of any excess.

Flouring a pan, after greasing, is usually not needed. If you choose to do so, make sure that the flour is just a “dusting”. When baking a chocolate cake, you can dust the pan with a little bit of cocoa and that way you don’t get a white film.

Displaying the Product -

If you put cookies, etc., on a “paper” plate, you may find that the food leaves a grease spot as the paper absorbs the extra fat. If this happens, transfer the cookies to a new plate. Or choose a more “plastic” type of plate or use foil covered cardboard.

Always use food grade plastic bags --- dry cleaner’s bags and trash bags are not acceptable. They have different chemicals and dye in them that should not be ingested.

If you need a special utensil to serve your food product --- bring it with you. Most judges will carry a knife and cutting board only. For example, if you made a pie, bring a pie server.

Sometimes there is excess humidity in the air. Before baking your first item of the day, preheat the oven with the door **open** for the first 2 minutes. This will help the excess moisture to be removed from the oven and you will be baking with “dry heat” which is more desirable.

If your oven is baking unevenly, rotate the pans, but wait until about 5 minutes after the “halfway” point. If you moved the pans at the halfway mark, it can disturb the air cells and cause the item to fall.

When shaping a loaf of yeast bread, roll it out into a rectangle to get out all the air pockets. Then roll it up as tightly as you can, pinch the seams shut, and tuck in the ends. This will give us a smooth top crust and eliminate some of the holes.

In summer time, reduce the proofing and raising time for yeast breads.

Generally, it’s a good idea to bake muffins without the cupcake liners.

Popcorn snacks will absorb lots of humidity. So experiment with the different ways of storing them so that you will have the freshest product possible.

If you put frosting on an item make sure it’s not too heavy or overpowering.