**What To Know Before You Bake Cupcakes**

Ever wondered why our cupcakes look so uniform? This is a handy tool we use for both scooping out cupcakes, but also layer cakes and frostings.

It allows you to get even measurements for both the batter mixtures to bake your sponge and also your frostings so that these can be equal across the batch.

It’s a lot easier than using normal spoons and the quick release mechanism ensures the scoop is nice and clean for each serving.

We recommend getting your food portioning scoop from a specialist cake shop online or catering supplier. At a pinch, ice cream scoops can work too!

Ovens often operate at different temperatures to what we assume. This could mean that they are too hot or too cool which in turn affects the overall cooking time, leading to overcooked in the case of too hot or under-baked in the case of too cool.

Oven thermometers are a cheap and easy way of calibrating your oven so that you are sure you are baking at the correct temperature every time.

# Bake it for Babies 2018

Each week, around 10 seemingly healthy babies in the UK die suddenly and unexpectedly. The Lullaby Trust funds research into the causes and prevention of sudden infant death, supports families bereaved by the death of a baby or toddler and raises awareness of safer sleep for babies.

Taking part in Bake it for Babies is an incredibly easy and fun way to help save lives. Anyone can get involved, whether you’re a whizz with a whisk or just starting to dabble with dough. Get friends, family and colleagues to join in and make something yummy for money!

When you sign up for Bake it for Babies you’ll receive a free fundraising pack full of all the ingredients you need to make your bake sale a showstopper. What’s more, once you confirm the date and location of your event, you’ll receive a free Lullaby Trust t-shirt and cake toppers.

# What is Red Velvet Cake?

We are obsessed with it and certainly have enjoyed our fair share of it at The Hummingbird Bakery, but what exactly is our bestselling Red Velvet flavour and where did this mysterious recipe come from?

**Where does Red Velvet cake come from?**

Red Velvet cake hails from the Southern United States and is a red vanilla sponge made with buttermilk and cocoa to give it a unique flavour and a light taste of chocolate.

But if you’re in London and want to try the real deal, your Red Velvet cake most certainly comes from us! (Or at least that’s what we hope...!)

**When was Red Velvet cake first made?**

First mentions of Red Velvet cake go back 200 years or thereabouts to the 19th century, so it has long been a favourite dessert across America.

**What is Red Velvet cake frosted with?**

It is usually topped with cream cheese frosting or, in some recipes, with a roux icing (sometimes called boiled milk frosting, flour buttercream or ermine frosting) that is made in a saucepan. Sometimes they are frosted with buttercream, but at our bakeries we use cream cheese frosting because we are fans of its tangy flavour.

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# Sweet baking ideas for Valentine’s Day

Everything turns heart-shaped around Valentine’s Day – and cakes are no exception! If you have a heart-shaped baking tin you’d like to try out, you can adapt your recipes with a little practice to work in your new tin.

If you’re working from a recipe, it’s worth remembering that changing the dimensions of the tin will alter the cooking times and thus your sponge may need more or less time depending on the size you want the cake to be.

As a guideline, only fill your cake tin two-thirds full to leave rising room and test that the centre of the sponge is cooked through with a metal skewer – if it comes out cleanly it is ready.

An oven thermometer will help you to check you are baking at the correct temperature.

Experiment with a few attempts to get the timing right, especially if the cake is for a special occasion. Even The Hummingbird Bakery’s recipe developers need a few goes to get their bakes right!

# Ideas for baking with the kids

Stay safe in the kitchen and explain the dangers when cooking around sharp knives and hot ovens. Doing this before you start to measure out any ingredients is a good idea as children are less likely to be distracted by all the delicious food around them.

Choose an easy recipe to follow and measure out all the ingredients beforehand.

Reading through the steps first will help kids to learn how to follow a recipe correctly in stages.

Runny golden syrup, melted chocolate, handfuls of sprinkles and lots of flour – needless to say, your kitchen may be a little on the messy side following an afternoon baking with the kids.

Making a mess around the mixing bowl is all part of the fun, though it’s always worthwhile getting little hands to have a go at the washing up bowl too!

Adding colour to frosting is lots of fun and allows children to see just how different coloured toppings are made.

Let them stir the food colouring in and watch the frosting magically change colour. Decorating is a chance to really let loose!

Share out different toppings into small bowls so that the kids can pick and mix to design their own cupcakes. Try treats like sprinkles, sweets, strawberry laces, chocolate buttons, popcorn, edible writing icing and edible glitter (go easy with this one, or else your kitchen may end up looking like Santa’s grotto!).

# A history of the cupcake

There is no single inventor of the cupcake. The history of the cupcake isn’t entirely clear as most recipes were developed in home kitchens and passed down through families and friends, with adaptations often made out of ease or convenience.

It is likely that the small size, dainty appearance and individual portioning made the cupcake an easy alternative to the rituals of slicing a whole cake and serving with forks. The heat of an oven was also an expense and reducing the size of the cakes to be baked was economical.

Furthermore, as we know from baking cupcakes with our little ones, their size and shape is great for children and for sharing, making them a handy dessert for birthday parties and celebrations. And let’s face it: no one likes to share cake!

As we know from our many-shaped novelty cake tins out there, cake mixture can be baked into virtually any shape. It’s likely that little teacups, ceramic cups or ramekins, rather than a specially shaped tin or paper cases, became the first foray into cup-shaped cakes.

Like with many foods, advances in food technology allowed cakes to travel. Commercial shop-bought cupcakes appeared around 1919 when American bakery company Hostess introduced a single-portioned ‘CupCake’ as a snack cake.

The first ever cupcake-only bakery opened in America and it wasn’t long after that The Hummingbird Bakery brought cupcakes to London, selling out on the first day of opening. And we’ve been baking them ever since!