

Glossary of Baking Terms

The language of baking clarifies what techniques and methods are needed for each recipe. Once you learn this language, you're on your way to mastering any recipe.

To cook in an oven with dry heat. The oven should always be heated for 10 to 15 minutes before baking.

A mixture of flour, liquid, and other ingredients that is thin enough to pour.

To thoroughly combine ingredients and incorporate air with a rapid, circular motion. This may be done with a wooden spoon, wire whisk, rotary eggbeater, electric mixer, or food processor.

To partially cook food by plunging it into boiling water for a brief period, then into cold water to stop the cooking process.

To heat a liquid until bubbles rise continually to the surface and break.

To heat sugar until it is melted and brown. Caramelizing sugar gives it a distinctive flavor.

To cut into small pieces using a sharp knife, appliance, or scissors.

When a thin, even film covers a metal spoon after it has been dipped into a cooked mixture and allowed to drain.

To stir together two or more ingredients until mixed.

To come to room temperature.

To beat one or more ingredients, usually margarine or butter, sugar, and/or eggs, until the mixture is smooth and fluffy.

To seal the edges of two layers of dough with the tines of a fork or your fingertips.

To distribute solid fat throughout the dry ingredients using a pastry blender, fork, or two knives in a scissors motion.

A measurement less than 1/8 teaspoon.

A soft, thick mixture of flour, liquids, fat, and other ingredients.

To distribute small amounts of margarine or butter evenly over the surface of pie filling or dough.

To drip a glaze or icing over food from the tines of a fork or the end of a spoon.

To sprinkle lightly with sugar, flour, or cocoa.

To make or press a decorative pattern into the raised edge of pastry.

To gently combine a heavier mixture with a more delicate substance, such as beaten egg whites or whipped cream, without causing a loss of air.

To coat with a liquid, thin icing, or jelly before or after the food is cooked.

To shred with a handheld grater or food processor.

To rub fat on the surface of a pan or dish to prevent sticking.

To produce small particles of food by forcing food through a grinder.

To fold, push and turn dough or other mixture to produce a smooth, elastic texture.

A temperature of about 105°F, which feels neither hot nor cold.

To stir together two or more ingredients until they are thoroughly combined.

To combine dry ingredients with liquid ingredients until the dry ingredients are thoroughly moistened but the mixture is still slightly lumpy.

To refrigerate a gelatin mixture until it thickens to the consistency of unbeaten egg whites.

To remove the skin of a fruit or vegetable by hand or with a knife or peeler. This also refers to the skin or outer covering of a fruit or vegetable.

To allow yeast dough to rise before baking. Or to dissolve yeast in a warm liquid and set it in a warm place for 5 to 10 minutes until it expands and becomes bubbly.

To chill in the refrigerator until a mixture is cool or until dough is firm.

The skin or outer coating of such foods as citrus fruit or cheese.

To cook a mixture until the surface billows rather than bubbles.

When dough is slightly mounded, not level.

To heat a mixture or liquid to just below the boiling point.

To cut slits in food with a knife, cutting partway through the outer surface.

Margarine, butter, ice cream, or cream cheese that is in a state soft enough for easy blending, but not melted.

To cut food into narrow strips using a sharp knife, grater, or food processor fitted with a shredding disk.

Egg whites or whipping cream beaten to the stage where the mixture forms soft, rounded peaks when the beaters are removed.

To cook food on a rack or in a wire basket over boiling water.

Egg whites beaten to the stage where the mixture will hold stiff, pointed peaks when the beaters are removed.

To combine ingredients with a spoon or whisk using a circular motion.

To mix lightly with a lifting motion, using two forks or spoons.

To beat rapidly with a wire whisk or electric mixer to incorporate air into a mixture in order to lighten and increase the volume of the mixture.

The colored outer peel of citrus fruit, which is used to add flavor. The zest is often referred to as "grated peel" in recipes. To create zest, choose the diagonal-hole side of a box grater (it will zest more cleanly than if you use the nail-hole side) and rub lightly to avoid getting the white pith, which is bitter. For broader strips of zest, use a swivel-blade peeler or a sharp knife to cut away the peel.

