

BAKING

NOTE: The **Spelt and Oat Bran Muffins** recipe published in HOW TO COOK WITHOUT RECIPES includes a mistake. It had to happen somewhere. The amount of milk specified 600mls/20 fl oz is around twice what it should be. Try 300mls . . . sorry.

SCONES

Perhaps THE most impressive treat you can produce for visitors, particularly if you are seen to make them without reference to a recipe. So, do show off in front of them if you like, but ideally the scones should be baking when guests arrive, and you will then have had time to excavate your hands from the inevitable encrustation of floury dough – you did remember to wear an apron?

Originally scones were fried in triangle shapes for Scottish breakfasts or were a quick thing to make in simple kitchens to use up soured milk. Before the invention of baking powder and self-raising flour the acid in such milk interacted with baking soda and cream of tartar to give the rise. The elevation of scones to dainty morsels eaten carefully in gracious surroundings rather grates with their simple roots. Although we no longer realise this, clever-dick versions made with an egg are not scones at all but are trying to ape the old Wigg, a very rich little yeast-raised cake popular when tea began to be so, but which quickly disappeared after baking powder was introduced in the 19th century. The basic American muffin is very much a scone mixture with added egg, and then baked in tins, like Wiggs were; the other clue to the muffin's origins is the insistent reminder not to work the mixture too much, which Wigg makers would recognise.

There are three things to resist when making scones:

- do not mix scones with an egg unless you are swanking, and then you mustn't call them scones at all. There is one exception, see below
- do not mix with cream rather than milk. If you use single cream the scones will be good but rather flatter. Double or clotted cream gives something like anaemic cow-pats. This is not what a scone should look like. Don't, or if you must, call them something else. *Cremes des vaches?*
- you must use virtually no pressure when you mix, knead, pat or roll the dough

How to do it:

8 or so rugged blokes' scones: 18 or so dainty girlie ones

The ideal measuring unit is a large breakfast cup or an English half pint measure – 300mls. Using a teacup or the 250mls US half pint means you'll get fewer

scones, but they'll be just as good. You can be a little cavalier with the flour but it's useless to use more butter because the scones turn out greasy and heavy.

2 units self-raising flour
½ unit warm milk
¼ unit caster sugar
Pinch salt
¼ unit butter

The oven has to be very hot to give a good rise and a crisp crust. So, lightly flour a baking tray and put this into an oven set at 220C/425F/gas mark 7.

Dissolve the sugar in the milk. Mix or sift together the flour and salt. Rub the butter into the flour with your fingertips until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs – see below. Then stir in the sweetened milk using a broad-bladed knife to keep the mixture light. And then -

For rugged blokes' scones: there's no point offering silly little things to a husky group which is starving after a big match, or watching one on the box. And it's a bit soft to offer dainty ones if you are not a dainty bloke yourself. These big scones look great and are more satisfying all round, their very size making you seem more hospitable.

Take the hot tray from the oven and put it on the hob or somewhere else heatproof and safe. Working quickly, turn the dough on to the baking tray and pat it into shape, at least 5cm/2" thick and an oblong or square shape; *don't* roll the dough. Using the very sharpest knife you have; a Stanley adjusted to maximum length of blade is ideal, cut quickly into big casual but even shapes, again using as little pressure as possible as this smears the cut surface and can prevent an even rise. Separate to space them evenly over the tray. Sprinkle with a little flour or paint with warm milk for a shiny finish. Bake for 10 – 12 minutes.

For dainty girlie scones: these are the ones for a sedate, grown-up time with nice napkins, fine china and both pets and children locked out. Gossip, scandal and salacious hopes for your future private life may then brazenly be paraded; this continues the custom of drawing rooms and Wiggs.

Take out the oven tray and put it onto the hob or somewhere else safe and heatproof. Turn the mixture onto a lightly floured surface and gently knead two or three times to even out the texture. Put this on to the lightly floured baking tray and working quickly pat this into an even shape and then roll out to at least 2.5cms/ 1" thick. DO NOT press heavily when rolling. Cut out scones with a

very sharp-edged circular shape, and then separate them evenly. Leftover dough can be lightly folded together to make one or two more or less precise scones. Sprinkle with flour or paint with a little milk for a shinier finish and then bake seven to eight minutes.

Increasing your repertoire

- **Cheese:** leave out the sugar but add ½ unit grated cheese, ideally a strong mature Cheddar or an excellent farmhouse Cheshire, Lancashire or Wensleydale. A few dashes of Tabasco are better than the traditional mustard powder, which tends to self-destruct in the oven's heat. The extra fat in the cheese can make these heavy, so leave out half the butter, or use a small egg and less milk to bind the mixture. I like to use the cheese in rough uneven crumbs, but others use it finely grated. Because it's a cheese scone the egg is OK, I promise.
- **Fruit, dried:** add about 1/3 unit currants, seedless raisins or sultanas. It's tantalizing to use muscatel raisins or much smaller currants plumped in sherry or in ginger wine if you are entertaining in winter. Matchsticks of dried apricots fattened up in orange juice or in something like Cointreau deliver a festive look and flavour; make up for the flight of the alcohol in the hot oven by mixing more of the orange spirit or liqueur into the butter or cream you serve.
- **Wholemeal:** use one unit white and one unit wholemeal. These are always best made into big worthy shapes. You won't eat again until tomorrow.

Cool tips:

If you have warmish hands, so the butter is melting rather than staying firm when you rub the butter into the flour, do this high above the bowl and then everything cools as it drops back, and the heat of your hands isn't creating more havoc in the bowl. Or, measure out the amount of butter in advance and part-freeze it. Grate coarsely into the bowl of flour and then rub it in.

If you have only plain flour, add three teaspoons of baking powder, and mix or sieve that into the flour.

If the milk is hot rather than warm, the baking powder in the flour will start to work too soon and may begin to exhaust itself before the scones are in the oven: if it is too cold, the crusts will form and brown before the scones have fully risen.

And cream teas . . .

If your scones are only slightly warm, the whipped cream or clotted cream can go on first and then be dolloped with strawberry jam; if they are being spread in advance rather than as you eat, it is better they are cold and then to put the jam

on first as this is a more reliable structure. If the scones are warm or hot when you eat them, the jam must go on first, which helps keep the cream in place.

Butter is optional and when used on a hottish scone, the soup of melty butter, cream and jam is frighteningly like American strawberry shortcake, no bad thing. Shortcake uses thinly sliced and sweetened fresh strawberries rather than jam. Do that with scones and you teeter on the very finest brink of social nicety: *“ I know the girls at my decoupage class will love them, and the vicar’s wife will knot her wiry lips, predictably, thinking I read cookery magazines - but will the bronzed Lithuanians tiling the lap pool appreciate them, or just think me vulgar? Does it matter? Tiens!”*

No-one promised cooking for others was easy. If you want to stray and use other types of jam, raspberry and black currant are the generally accepted boundaries. But of something has a decent acidity, add one or two others as part of a choice. Gooseberry perhaps, or greengage or Swedish cloudberry.

CAKE MAKING

It's impressive to present a cake you have baked yourself, and it's easier than ever these days with electric beaters and, particularly, non-stick cake pans. Here's a plain sponge cake baked in two pieces to stuff and to decorate, and two more interesting ones which are baked in one piece. Each is capable of being varied so you can make your own flavour.

THE ESSENTIAL SPONGE CAKE

The experienced cook will go on to make lighter whisked sponges which rely solely on eggs to rise, but this all-in-one mixture is richer in flavour and agreeably more dense and satisfying to eat. It is also exceptionally biddable and requires great effort by you for it to fail. With its base of equal weights of flour, butter, sugar and egg it is a mini-version of the Pound Cake, a traditional standby of home bakers for centuries.

How to do it:

To make two 18cm/7" wide sponges

110g/4oz self-raising flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

110g/4oz butter, room temperature

110g/4oz caster sugar

2 large eggs

2-3 drops pure vanilla essence – or according to your fancy

Pre-heat the oven to 170C/325F. Choose two 18cm/7" wide shallow baking pans at least 2.5cm/1" deep. If they are non-stick you can relax; otherwise they should be lightly buttered and base-lined with a non-stick silicone baking paper.

Into a large mixing bowl, sift the flour and baking powder, which can be done by putting them into a large sieve and shaking that vigorously over the mixing bowl. Then pile everything else into the middle and start whisking until thoroughly combined, but no longer. If your sponges turn out a bit tough make a mental note not to whisk for so long. The mixture should be slack enough to drop easily from a spoon when it's tapped lightly on the edge of the bowl. If it resists or needs a couple of taps, slacken the mixture with just a teaspoonful or two of water.

Carefully divide the mixture between the prepared baking pans – don't pour from a height as this will knock air out of the mixture and adversely affect the rise. Flatten with a knife and then swiftly put them onto the centre shelf of the pre-heated oven. Bake 30 minutes.

Once they are out of the oven, quickly run a very sharp knife around the edges and then turn out the sponges on to a cooling rack. Remove the paper if you have used any.

When they are cool, the best filling of all is raspberry jam and whipped cream, of course, plus some icing sugar dusted lightly through a sieve over the top.

Increasing your repertoire:

- **Chocolate:** add at least a big tablespoon of unsweetened cocoa powder to the mixture; I leave in the vanilla essence but you can leave it out, or make the cake mysterious by also adding lime or orange oil. Fill with whipped cream, perhaps in which you have secreted cherries soaked in rum, raspberries or strawberries. For Aussies, Kiwis or anyone remotely tropical slice ripe bananas and/or passion fruit pulp into whipped cream for the filling. Or use the truffle mixture described under Chocolate sauces, below.
- **Citrus:** add the finely grated zest (done directly into the bowl) of a sweet orange or a couple of lemons; a mixture of the two gives a St Clements Sponge. Fill with whipped cream, perhaps mixed with some lemon or orange curd
- **Coffee:** add a tablespoon of instant coffee powder dissolved in minimal boiling water. Fill with whipped cream into which you have added quite a lot of toasted and chopped walnuts. Hazelnuts and almonds are just as good.
- **Mocha:** add half a tablespoon of cocoa and half a tablespoon of instant coffee powder which has been dissolved in minimal boiling water. Fill with whipped cream flavoured with chunkily chopped dark chocolate or with whipped cream flavoured with instant coffee.
- **Passion Fruit:** squeeze the pulp of two or more passion fruit into whipped cream as the filling. This is specially good with an orange-flavoured sponge.
- **Spiced:** add a teaspoon or more of cinnamon or of good mixed spice; this is nice added to an orange cake. Fill with whipped cream sweetened with honey
- **And for children's birthday cakes:** colour the basic mixture with approved pure food colourings: blue, green and bright red are their favourite hate-it/love-it food colours. Chop jelly beans into whipped cream for the filling.

ORANGE SYRUP CAKE

This has been a family recipe for at least a century: it came with my Great Aunts from Norfolk Island and so must be even older than that. It has two important things about patience for you to absorb. One, the better you cream the butter and sugar the better the result, and two it really does taste very much better if you leave it for three days before cutting into it; that's because you pour an icing-sugar syrup through it when it's hot and this takes its time to penetrate and improve all the cake.

How to do it:

Choose a deep, non-stick baking pan that's 18cm/7" in diameter or 20cm/8" square. If it's not non-stick, lightly butter the interior and base-line with non-stick silicone paper. Turn the oven on to 180C/350F.

185g/6oz butter, room temperature
185g/6oz caster sugar
3 medium eggs, beaten
185g/6oz self-raising flour
1 teaspoon grated orange zest
2-3 tablespoons fresh orange juice.

Icing syrup

250g/8oz icing sugar
150ml/ ¼ pint fresh orange juice
1 teaspoon grated orange zest
1 tablespoon orange liqueur or brandy if you have it

Cream together the butter and sugar, no, *really* cream it, so it looks and feels like cream. This takes ages even with an electric beater, so this is the time to fix it to its stand and then to walk away; it can also be done in a food processor with the plastic blade. Only then should you beat in the eggs; if you have used a food processor so far, now turn the mixture out into a mixing bowl.

Sift the flour over the mixture and then gently fold it in. Zest the orange rind directly over the mixture and once mixed in, add orange juice to give you a soft dropping consistency – see above.

Ladle – do not pour – into the prepared pan and bake for about an hour or until the depression made with the flat of your index finger pressed into the top springs back.

Cool in the pan out of the oven for 10 minutes, while you prepare the icing syrup. Sift the icing sugar and then dissolve it in the orange juice and or liqueur and then zest orange rind directly on to the mixture.

Turn the cake out on to a rack sitting over a baking tray or large plate.

Pierce the cake all over with a knitting needle or something else long and thin. Spoon the icing mixture over the warm cake, retrieving any that falls or soaks through, and continue until all the syrup has been absorbed. When quite cold, wrap the cake in foil or cling film – not greaseproof – and keep in an airtight tin for three days before cutting.

Increasing your repertoire

You can make this a lemon, lime, or mandarin cake. Try it with pink grapefruit if you must . . . but I think this would need some other help, perhaps spice or Angostura Bitters, or anything. Grapefruit rarely seems to work in any sort of cookery.

MELLOW YELLOW BANANA CAKE

The traditional banana cake of Australasia is a big bold party cake which lasts exceptionally well. It is traditionally made with baking soda, which has the curious effect of darkening the cake's colour and heightening what were once proto-seeds into black flakes. This version doesn't use soda, and is thus a mellow yellow, making the distinct flavour rather more of a surprise.

You might think it a little thing, but here you must learn bananas taste best when their skins are spotted, meaning they are sweeter and less starchy; indeed for this recipe parts of the bananas can even have changed from creamy flesh to a translucent, honey-like, over ripeness. You **MUST** not make this cake with the sort of banana which so many in the UK even give to children, those which have green markings on the skin and which make a protesting screech when you peel them. A properly ripe banana makes almost no sound when you peel it. The sticky, puckering acidity of the bananas most people in the UK profess to prefer make my teeth itch, and anyway are far too high in potassium to be healthy.

How to do it:

Choose a 23-25cm/9-10" square non-stick baking pan. If it's not non-stick, light butter the interior and base-line with non-stick silicone paper. Turn the oven on to 160C/325F

185g /6ozbutter

185g/6oz caster sugar

3 medium eggs, beaten, at room temperature

3-4 very ripe bananas, fewer if really big

3 tablespoons milk

1 teaspoon pure vanilla essence

375g/12oz self-raising flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

Cream the butter and sugar together very well – see notes for guidance in the previous recipe. Gradually add the eggs as you then continue to beat. In a separate bowl, mash the bananas until frothy and quite even – some lumps don't matter; into this stir the milk and the vanilla essence. Sift the baking powder with the flour and gently fold it alternately with the banana mixture into the creamed butter and egg mixture. Do not over mix but stop as soon as it looks even.

Ladle lightly into the prepared tin and then bake for 45-60 minutes depending on the size of your tin. It is done when the middle of the top springs back if you depress it with your finger.

Cool for ten minutes in the tin before turning out on to a wire rack.

This also improves with keeping, It is great just by itself or it can be split and filled with whipped cream, swirled with mashed banana and a little orange or lemon juice. A chocolate icing of some kind is a further improvement but for banana max-out, do this:

Chocolate banana icing: Mash a gorgeously ripe banana into 500g/1lb icing sugar and then work in 50-60g/2-3oz of softened butter until all is even. Mix in two tablespoons of cocoa powder, so the flavour is pronounced and the colour is strong; this is no place to be wussy. Spread this over the top and side of the cake, and flick it into roughness with the tines of a fork or by swirling with the tip of a knife. I *know* it's poncing about but, once you get the hang of it, this is addictive and it always attracts comment. . .

Increasing Your Repertoire:

The thick puree of mashed bananas can be replaced in the cake with other fruit; brother Ross of barley-broth fame mixes fruit salad from a tin with the banana.

Also try

- thick apple puree spiked with cinnamon and nutmeg
- stewed tamarillo sweetened with a little honey
- drained crushed pineapple with nutmeg and rum in the filling or icing
- stewed rhubarb
- crushed berries or mixtures of crushed berries all seem worth the effort.

THE ULTIMATE CHOCOLATE CAKE/DESSERT

As rich and as dark as any *chocophile* could possibly want, this is a cake which can't go wrong – it is supposed to be squidgy and can even be uncooked and runny in the middle. This moistness means it can safely be warmed to serve, and the possibilities to make this your own recipe are many.

If you bake the mixture in two pans you get a lighter result, if you bake in just one it is heavier and more likely to be mousse-like in the middle. Of course, to serve it very soft in the middle you and your guests must be cool about eating egg which is not thoroughly cooked, but perfect pleasure is ever greater when the *frisson* of danger is present.

How to do it:

Makes eight or more portions

200g/7oz 70% cocoa-solids chocolate
175g/6oz unsalted butter
175g/6oz caster sugar
5 large eggs, separated
75g/3oz ground almonds, hazelnuts or walnuts
50g/2oz plain flour
Your chosen flavouring*

First prepare a 20cm/8” round cake tin or 2 x 20cm/8” sandwich tin, by lightly buttering them and then dusting with cocoa, so you don't get the nasty white marks left by using the usual flour; do this even if you have non-stick baking pans.

Melt the butter, remove from the heat source and then stir in the chocolate, which will melt in the residual heat. Let it cool to ambient temperature. Then beat in the egg yolks one by one, stir in the ground nuts and then the flour.

Now, choose and add your flavouring*. A half teaspoon or so of genuine vanilla extract is always right, but think also of Boyajian lime or orange oil, of orange flower water or rose water. A few tablespoons of cognac, dark rum, Calvados, Crème de Menthe or any of the orange spirits or liqueurs all work well . . . be courageous for whatever you add will lose a little of itself in the oven heat and a bit more when the cake is served cold.

Whisk up the egg whites until firm but not dry, that is they hold their shape in a slovenly, uncommitted sort of way but aren't so stiff they expect a salute. Take a large spoonful of the beaten whites and stir them evenly into the mixture,

which lightens it somewhat. Fold in the remaining egg whites, using a light action like a figure of eight lying on its side. When it's pretty even ladle rather than pour the mixture into the cake pan or pans and bake in a 170C/325F oven until the sides begin to shrink from the tin. This will take about 25 minutes if you are using two cake pans and about 40 minutes in a single pan. The top will be crusty and the centre still very moist – cook on for a while if you'd rather it were less squishy. Only making this a couple of times in your oven will tell you what's right for you.

Let the cake rest 10 minutes before turning it out to cool, ideally on a wire rack. Serve in thinnish wedges with raspberry puree, with a hot chocolate sauce or with whipped cream.

Increasing your repertoire:

Each of the recommended nuts will give a different result but don't overlook the possibilities of pine nuts or pistachios, even of peanuts, to make a flavour entirely your own; but do roast the nuts before you grind or pound them

For the most expectant of guests, make a vanilla or rosewater flavoured cake, use almonds as your nuts and then line the baking tins with rose-geranium leaves, which give a sensual smoky-rose flavour to the cake; it's a very old British trick which more than deserves rekindling. Serve with the leaves still added or make the flavour more mysterious by removing them.

BREAD - THE WHITE LOAF

What is tastier than properly made white bread with a crackling crust? Nothing. Yet, bread is just four simple ingredients, and from these you will create dozens of other loaves, savoury or sweet, and each easily built if you remember just a few facts.

Interaction with water is what allows yeast best to stretch the bubbles of the gluten found in bread-making or 'hard' flour and so give the best rise. Add milk, butter or oil to the dough and these then coat the gluten, making it harder for the water to get at it and stretch it, and so you get a lesser rise and a more cake-like or 'short' result. Know this, and you can adapt or adopt accordingly – or not.

Salt added to the dissolving dried-yeast mixture, rather than directly to the flour, will slow it down or half-kill it. A pinch of sugar speeds up the proving of dried yeast, but is not needed if you use fresh yeast: if you can use fresh yeast in any recipe, use double the weight you would use of dried yeast. Making a sticky sponge of flour, water and yeast, to first 'prove' the yeast is quite unnecessary these days because yeast is reliable. The extra rising time taken by this extra step will improve the ultimate flavour, but this is just as easily gained by letting your dough rise slowly, in a cool to warm ambient temperature rather than anything hotter.

The unit-formula format for recipes used worldwide by bakers is a very easy way to cook because you need only a set of metric scales, ideally the sort which allows you to set it back to zero and then measure and add the next ingredient without emptying the bowl. There are electronic versions and manual types, neither very expensive. Here are the basic recipes you will one day know by heart, supplied by Global Baker Dean Brettschnieder.

	BASIC	SWEET	SULTANA	F/CACCIA
Flour	100%	100%	100%	100%
Salt	2%	2%	2%	2%
Dried yeast	1%	1%	1%	1%
Water	+/- 60%	+/-50%	+/-50%	+/-55%
Milk			5%	
Butter		10%	5%	
Sugar		10%	5%	
Sultanas			50-60% - +/- 10%	
Olive oil				6%

The 100% flour weight can of course be whatever you choose from 500g to 50kg or more. The secondary percentages above are proportions of the weight of the flour and not of the entire mixture, so do not expect them to add up to any meaningful figure. Too high a yeast content which makes for a faster rising, makes bread dry and unpleasant if it is not eaten almost at once. Using less yeast even than the amount above will mean a longer rise time, but as this will also yield a much better flavour it seems a good objective.

An exception to this advice is when you make pizza dough; use the proportions for basic bread, but double the yeast or it takes much too long before you are eating.

Add sun-dried tomatoes to the bread dough and you might need to increase the water to balance the amount they will absorb from the dough – or you could pre-soak them and be careful with the amount of water you add to the dough. Sun-dried tomatoes or olives soaked in oil will make a flatter bread, because the gluten will be coated with their oil content. You are getting the picture . . .

If you would like to make a bread with, say, beer, you'll get the same sort of rise as with water because beer has no fat or oil in it, but you might want to make it sweeter with a little white or brown sugar, less bitter with some sherry vinegar or lemon juice, or richer with butter, which will reduce the rise a little. A loaf made with a proportion of milk will also be somewhat softer and more cake-like, perfect if you want to make something with dried fruit in it.

It's worth noting many spices, cinnamon, for instance, can inhibit gluten. Thus to make spicy buns, when you might also add inhibiting milk or butter to the dough, you would expect to wait longer for a good rise before baking, or impatiently use a little extra yeast. And so on. . . *ad delicosum*. Once you know such simple things it is a doddle to make your own recipes which will work first time.

How to do it:

Mix the flour with the salt and sugar and warm this mixture in the oven while you dissolve the yeast in a cup of warm water taken from the full amount you estimate you'll need. Cover and leave until the yeast is dissolved and really foamy – up to 20 minutes. You may add a pinch only of sugar, but don't if you have substituted twice the amount of fresh yeast.

Make a pile of the flour on a large board or smooth surface and then make a well in the middle. Add the yeast mixture and half the remaining water, and start to mix together, adding more water until you have a dough which is slightly sticky – too little water makes as bad a loaf as too much.

Knead for 10 – 20 minutes until the texture has mellowed and is smooth and shiny – looking like a milking breast some would say. You can add more flour or water if you need to do so. VERY lightly oil the bowl in which you warmed the flour, turn the dough in this, cut a slash in the top, cover with a damp tea towel and leave to rise. The slower this happens the better the eventual flavour, so nowhere hot and nowhere draughty as this will give an uneven rise; you can even do it in the refrigerator overnight. When doubled in size, punch down lightly, and knead a few times – this is when you would add your sultanas or other chunky extras.

Shape on a lightly floured baking tray or put into a lightly greased and floured loaf tin. The best way to do either is to use your hands to push and pull the dough until it is about the width of the length of the baking tin and a couple of times longer than it is wide. Roll loosely from the short side to get a sausage shape about as long as the tin: put this into the tin with the seam side down, or put directly on to a baking tray.

If you want a round or oval loaf, pull the dough into shape by folding the edges underneath all around to get the shape you want. If you want slashes in the top, now is the time to do it, with something as sharp as possible. Cover lightly and then let rise to twice its size again.

Bread traditionally bakes best in a cooling temperature, needing you to adjust the temperature two or three times during baking. I find I get good results baking at a single temperature. In which case a loaf made with 675g/1 ½ lbs flour will bake at 230C/450F and will need 45-50 minutes; if this flour weight is baked as two loaves it will take 30 – 40 minutes. To ensure a good crust shake the loaf from the tin or tins after 2/3rds of the estimated baking time, reduce the oven to 350F/180C and return the loaf to the oven for the rest of the time; if you do this expect the whole process to take the longer time. The loaf is done when a sharp tap on its base resonates back at you, as though it were hollow.

Never let anyone attempt to slice your hot bread or rolls. They will turn both into an ugly paste, which gets worse when they try to butter it. Ugh. Take back the knife and turn it or your tongue on them instead to annihilate the beasts. A bread loaf should not be sliced carefully until only just warm; but it can be pulled apart with proper and enjoyable beastliness. It's good manners only ever to pull apart bread rolls rather than to cut, however hot or cold they are.

Global Baker Dean Brettschnieder has a mission to get baking of all kinds back in to the mainstream of the food world. An exceptionally gifted baker and author, his fourth baking book GLOBAL BAKER includes a DVD with a demonstration of good kneading technique: highly recommended. Dean has long memorised the formulae above for bread, just as millions of daily-bread makers have around the world, and these basic proportions are still how he begins every new bread recipe

Elizabeth David's English Bread and Yeast Cookery (Penguin) and my little Bread & Yeast Cookery (Macdonald), which Miss David kindly recommended, are worthwhile exploring. Lately bread books published by young British bakers have won terrific accolades, too: deservedly so.