

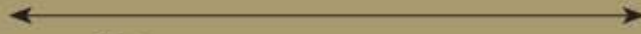
— Matt Lewis and Renato Poliafito's first book, *Baked*, was published to major critical acclaim and raved about across the blogosphere. Since then, Lewis and Poliafito's Brooklyn-based bakery has continued to garner national recognition: They've gone on to open a second Baked in Charleston, South Carolina, and their products are now found in stores across the country. And yet, while their hearts remain close to home, in this new book the authors present a tribute to the most beloved desserts from across the country.

From Mississippi Mud Pie to Black & White Cookies, from Devil's Food Cake with Angel Frosting to Red Velvet Whoopie Pies, Lewis and Poliafito take on our country's treasured treats. These are desserts that have been passed down through generations, tucked away in Grandma's cookbooks, and shared at church suppers and small town gatherings.

Of course, Lewis and Poliafito reinvent these recipes with their signature tongue-in-cheek style, introducing a new air of sophistication to these favorites. Think Grasshopper Bars with a fudgy brownie base, light mint filling, and a dark ganache glaze; Salt-n-Pepper Sandwich Cookies that are an homage to the Oreo; and Caramel Apple Cake covered in a slightly sweet caramel frosting. They even include the recipe for their most in-demand creation, the Sweet & Salty Brownie. Including favorite recipes for classic desserts to sadly neglected sweets, the recipes in this collection—from breakfast treats to late-night confections and everything in-between—will delight readers.



BAKED EXPLORATIONS



Classic AMERICAN
DESSERTS *Reinvented*



MATT LEWIS



RENATO POLIAFITO



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
TINA RUPP



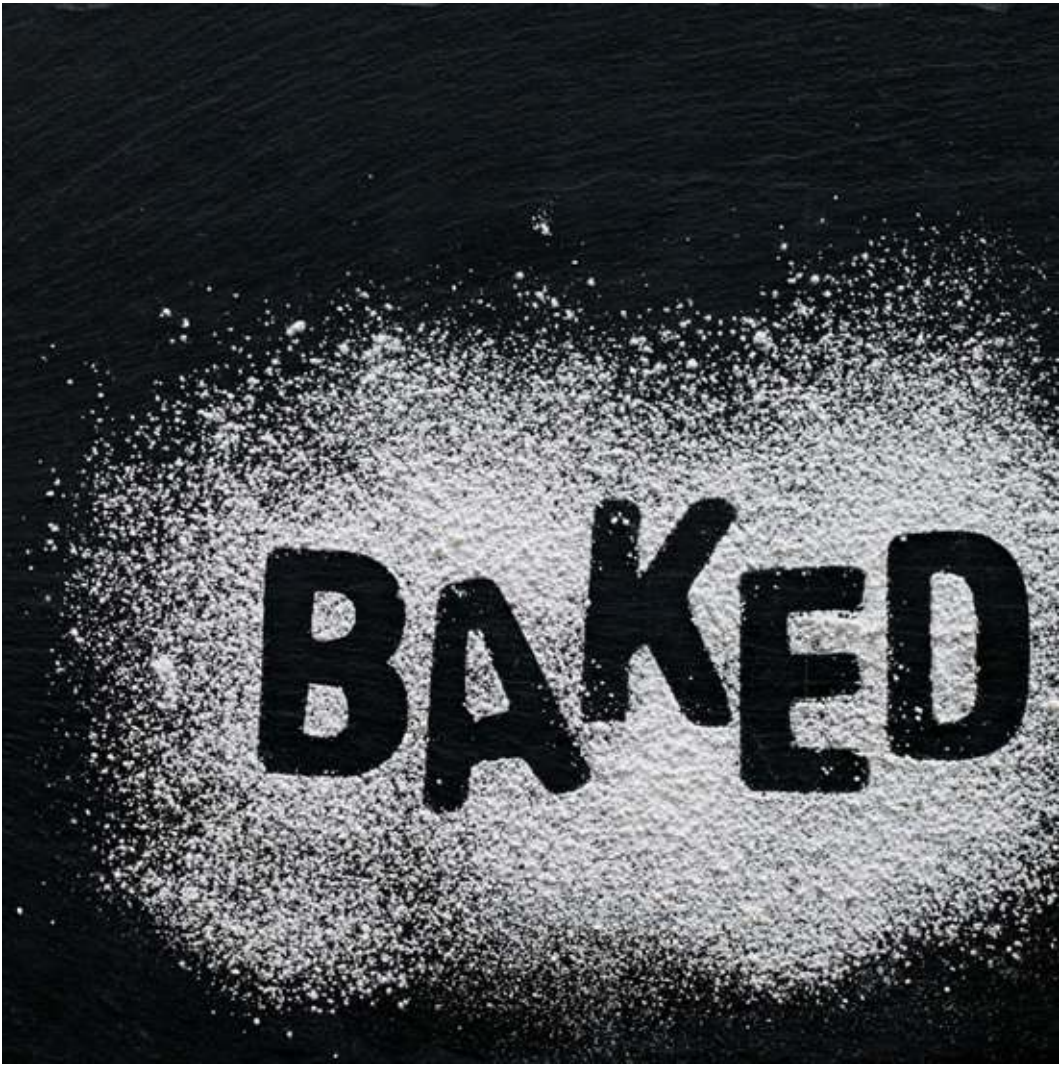
BAKED EXPLORATIONS

← *Classic AMERICAN DESSERTS Reinvented* →

MATT LEWIS
*
RENATO POLIAFITO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
TINA RUPP

STEWART, TABORI & CHANG NEW YORK



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Introduction

GETTING BAKED, AGAIN

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE

I no longer vacation like a normal person. Or, rather, I no longer *plan* vacations like a normal person. Now, when cobbling together and researching the traditional parts of a holiday (destination, arrival time, hotel, and length of stay), I also include at least one dessert or pastry excursion of note. This complicates matters for both my traveling companions and myself. Whereas before, a simple ski vacation included the basic elements of planning, I now add a layer of complexity that most of my friends would rather skip. In addition to choosing the mountain, the condo, and the best month to ski, I might also insist that we spend a day off-slope in search of a much-written-up, much-blogged-about creamy bourbon milkshake. The kind made with homemade vanilla bean ice cream, homemade butterscotch sauce, and top-shelf bourbon and blended at the same location by the same family for many, many years.

Early on, I referred to my dessert jaunts as “research.” I would tell myself (and my very tired and very full traveling companions) that I needed to “test” every chocolate chip cookie, every brownie, all manner of cakes and cupcakes, and every type of breakfast pastry to bring a deeper understanding to my development work at Baked or on the Baked books or for possible future concepts. Truth is, I would be eating my way through the United States and beyond, regardless of my occupation. It is my obsession and compulsion.

People often ask me if I ever tire of eating brownies (a signature Baked product). Absolutely not. What about chocolate chip cookies—don’t I want to take a break from chocolate chip cookies? Never. I enjoy finding the subtle differences from bakery to bakery and state to state. I want to know why a certain bakery in North Carolina always makes a crunchy chocolate chip with classic, tiny chips, and another bakery in Oregon always makes chewy ones with large chunks of chocolate. Is the disparity regional? Did the cookie in North Carolina originate from a hand-me-down heirloom recipe? Is the Oregon cookie an amalgam, a collaboration by a series of pastry chefs who rotated in and out the bakery door?

My dessert “research” is neither conventional nor scientific. The format is loose, and the results are beside the point. I enjoy what I do, and I will always choose Pierre Hermé over Mona Lisa. My worldview is formed by desserts and the people who make them, and my true satisfaction is derived from finding pockets of regionalism in an increasingly homogenous America.

I’LL SHOW YOU MINE, IF YOU SHOW ME YOURS

There are obvious regional dessert specialties. The black and white cookie is nothing short of a phenomenon in and around New York City, while remaining distinctly off the radar in much of the rest of the country. Banana cream pie is a staple of the Los Angeles area restaurant and bakery circuit, yet it makes only brief and lackluster appearances elsewhere. Booze, especially the likes of Kentucky bourbon and Tennessee rye, is prominent in Southern desserts. Local fruits and produce are often directly tied to a regional specialty (i.e., blueberries in Maine, peaches in Atlanta). These observations are interesting, but it is the lesser-known regional subtleties that make my head explode. Dig a little

deeper and unearth the treasures.

During Renato's and my travels for various food-related research (a great benefit to owning a bakery and writing a cookbook), we met people who introduced us to favorite desserts that had been passed down through generations and at church suppers and small town gatherings. These recipes, carefully archived, are perhaps hyper-regional. These are recipes that are typically neatly handwritten on brittle yellowing paper and tucked away in Grandma's favorite cookbooks. An anomaly in a digital world.

We are always honored when people share these recipes with us (even, surprisingly, the Jell-O pretzel salad), and we are happy to share in return. It's an "I'll show you mine if you show me yours" scenario that has been deeply influential in our American baking repertoire, and we work daily to re-create or restore these truly great baking principles. Give us your vintage recipes, and we'll—ever so lovingly—turn them on their head.

ABANDONMENT ISSUES

Another subset of American desserts that Renato and I pursue with glee could be classified as Abandoned Desserts. Boston cream pie, Mississippi mud, all things grasshopper, and their equivalents are desserts that never quite endured like the mainstays of American baking: chocolate chip cookies, apple pie, and brownies. The reasons for their gradual decline are varied, though still explainable.

Desserts, like fashion, are highly influenced by cycles and trends. If you were afloat in a sea of lava cake (aka molten chocolate cake) during the nineties, you were not alone. The dessert was on every restaurant menu (regardless of cuisine and price point) throughout the decade. As of this writing, spiking desserts with bacon is de rigueur. These fashions are part of a natural cycle. Lava cake will slowly fade into misty, dew-covered nostalgia, and bacon-flavored chocolate will become a fleeting trend, like parachute pants. When Renato and I dig through our pile of neglected desserts, we like to focus on investigating those beauties that lived through a few heady trend cycles and then were unjustly tossed to the gutter, like grasshopper pie.

We also look for baked goods that almost achieved classic status, like chiffon cake. For some reason, these desserts never quite reached their potential, and we place the blame squarely on the terrible versions people have encountered. After all, eating a substandard chiffon cake is like eating a kitchen sponge and sawdust sandwich.

Regardless, the Abandoned Desserts are something of a preoccupation of ours. We feel that it is our duty to provide some support to these old friends.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book, *Baked Explorations*, is a tribute to beloved American desserts—treats and baked goods that are regional gems, fading beauties, or family secrets. It is a compilation of some of the more interesting items we found in our travels.

Renato and I set about looking for the roadways and history to all things sweet and realized that there is no direct route. Most recipes we found had been altered and tweaked by so many hands that one person's simple chocolate cake recipe was completely different from the next-door neighbor's, not to mention the recipe from the person two states over.

In some instances, we left recipes virtually unchanged from the version we were given. In other cases, we performed a Baked makeover. This is not a compendium, nor a voluminous history of baked goods.

Think of it as an easygoing road trip with stop-offs at the quirky and unusual monuments. Of course we included a few Baked customer favorites as well.

I hope you enjoy making and eating every recipe, and we encourage you to share a few with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt R.', is centered above the collage of images.



EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO KNOW TO

Get Baked

~~eggs~~

~~coffee~~

blow



KITCHEN TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

MY KITCHEN OVERFLOWETH WITH USELESS, DISCARDED, AND UNNECESSARY, KITCHEN TOOLS AND UTENSILS. I is an archive of the superfluous, acquired many years ago during a brief, but painful, addiction to all forms of gadgetry. In an effort to help you avoid this brutal form of bread-machine and garlic press sadism, I have compiled a list of the most basic tools you will need for your baking kitchen. You can make anything in this book with just the tools and equipment listed below.

←—————→

Baking sheets: I recommend buying heavy-duty, inexpensive, light-colored, rimmed, baking sheets. I almost always bake on basic aluminum half-sheet pans (18 by 13 inches) found at restaurant supply stores and various retailers (see [Sources](#)). Generally speaking, the newfangled insulated and cookie-specific sheet pans are overpriced and not as effective.

Bench knife: A bench knife, or dough scraper, is an extraordinarily useful tool. Generally a 3 inch by 5 inch sheet of metal attached to a wooden or plastic handle, it is used to cut, portion, and turn dough. And it is extremely effective for scraping down and cleaning surfaces.

Brownie and bar pans: I always use a light metal or glass baking dish for bars and brownies. Dark metal pans produce unsavory, extra-crispy edges.

Bundt pan: Every home baker's equipment collection should include at least one Bundt pan. I use the basic 10- and 12-cup versions made by Nordic Ware. They are heavy, easy to use, and should last forever. There are also many decorative Bundt pans on the market (that turn out shapes like rosettes or castles), and you can absolutely use them for our recipes. Just make sure to grease all the nooks and crannies of the specialty pans to prevent unsightly surface breakage.

Cake pans: Keep it simple, straightforward, and economical. Use the professional aluminum cake pans available from almost any kitchen supply store (see [Sources](#)). Stay away from dark pans to prevent crispy cake edges.

Cake turntable: It is much easier to decorate a cake (or sugar cookies, or brownies) on a rotating cake turntable. Heavy-duty turntables (which we recommend) are not inexpensive, but they are well worth the cost if you are an avid decorator. I would avoid the plastic versions altogether; they tend to be flimsy and fall apart easily.

Candy and chocolate thermometers: Candy and chocolate thermometers come in many shapes, price points, and styles (including an incredibly cool laser version). For the beginning candy maker, I recommend the old-school inexpensive clip-on candy thermometer. Make sure it has gradations of 2 to 5 degrees and a range of 100 to 400 degrees F. Also, many basic candy thermometers mark all the stages of candy making (hard-ball, soft-ball, etc.)—this makes things all the easier for you. This type of thermometer should cost no more than fifteen dollars.

Cooling racks: I generally use two cooling racks when baking cookies and cakes so I have enough room for everything that comes out of the oven. I prefer the basic collapsible version (color and materials do not matter) that fits perfectly over a half-sheet pan.

Cupcake pans: The cupcakes in this book were tested in the familiar 12-cup cupcake/muffin pan made of light-colored metal. If you elect to use a different cup size, you will have to change the baking time.

accordingly. The basic rule of thumb: Mini muffins or cupcakes usually bake in half the suggested baking time or less, while the larger pans usually require time and half in the oven.

Food processor: If you bake and cook more than occasionally, I wholeheartedly recommend purchasing a large (9- to 12-cup) food processor. I know they are oversized, heavy, not exactly beautiful, and often viewed as difficult to clean. However, once you own one, you will never give it up. It chops nuts and graham crackers with ease. It makes some batters, some icing, and pie dough with the flick of a switch. It's like an assistant, only better. Go get one. It has many uses in the savory kitchen as well.

Ice cream maker: Ice cream makers are fun to have around and experiment with. I own a fifty-dollar Cuisinart ice cream machine, and it works just fine (as long as you freeze the bowl ahead of time). For the more serious ice cream maker, there are more serious machines with larger capacities and built-in compressors (which eliminate the whole frozen-bowl business).

Ice cream scoop: The ice cream scoop with a release mechanism is a very important tool, if not a necessity. I use several different sizes of scoops to form perfect and uniform cookie dough balls and portion cake batters—not to mention scoop ice cream.

Loaf pans: As with all pans, simpler equals better. Loaf pans (9 by 5 by 3 inches or thereabouts) should be inexpensive and made of light-colored metal. I have three very old, very inexpensive, very effective, very battered Chicago Metallic versions, and I have a feeling they will outlast me.

Measuring cups and spoons: For liquid measurements, I recommend Pyrex (glass) 2-cup and 4-cup sizes. They're handy for melting butter in a microwave, too.

For dry measurements, I recommend a basic set of metal measuring cups from ¼- to 2-cup sizes.

All the recipes in the book were tested by scooping dry ingredients into the measuring cup, then leveling the top of the cup with a straight-edged knife (often referred to as the “spoon and sweep” method). All light and dark brown sugars should be packed tightly and leveled to the top of the cup.

For measuring spoons, use the most basic set of metal spoons you can find. They usually come locked together by a metal ring, starting with ¼ teaspoon and going up to 1 tablespoon. Measure all ingredients level with the rim of the spoon.

Microplane: Microplane actually refers to a brand. They make the long, thin graters most commonly found in commercial and home kitchens. At home, I use one grater strictly for spices and another strictly for zesting fruit and, if need be, grating cheese. Do not be tempted to purchase a specialized “zesting” tool; the Microplane is more practical and has many more uses.

Microwave oven: I know the microwave oven is frowned upon in many foodie kitchens; however, I am not ashamed to say that I use mine constantly. It melts chocolate, reheats coffee, and makes boiling water for tea a cinch. To melt chocolate (or butter) in the microwave, use short bursts of low power, regularly removing the ingredient to stir it, then repeating the process until it is fully melted. If you don't have a microwave, no worries; you can melt butter and chocolate in a double boiler.

Mixing bowls: You should own a three-to-five-bowl set of spouted nesting mixing bowls, preferably made of melamine. Melamine bowls are lightweight, super cheap, and easy to clean (I hardly use my old ceramic bowls, but I just can't stand to part with them).

Parchment paper: Parchment paper is essential to the home baker. I use it to line cookie sheets, cake pans, and loaf pans. It keeps things from sticking, and it is a much less messy option than cooking sprays and other grease-containing items (in particular that horrible flour spray). If you are baking

cookies, you can reuse the parchment paper at least once. I find that silicone baking sheet liners don't produce the same kind of browning as parchment does.

Pie plates or tins: You can bake a pie in almost any pie plate or tin, but I am partial to metal and Pyrex glass. Disposable tins generally produce a soggy crust, and ceramic pie plates, while by far the most attractive, tend to conduct heat unevenly (often due to the make and age of the pan).

Pie weights: Pie weights help the dough hold its shape and prevent it from shrinking while baking. You can buy specially made pie weights from most kitchen stores or save a few dollars and use dried beans.

Skillets: I highly recommend getting a set (about three sizes) of cast-iron skillets. I found mine at a garage sale. They were inexpensive and already seasoned (a huge plus to purchasing used cast-iron ware), and I swear they are easier to clean than many more expensive pans. Additionally, I like the chewy edges they produce on both the [cheese grits](#) and the [chocolate skillet cake](#) in this book.

Spatulas: You should own several high-heat spatulas in a variety of shapes and sizes. They are essential for scraping down bowls, mixing light batters, and folding egg whites.

I also have offset spatulas—several small metal ones—for detail-oriented jobs like smoothing batter into baking pans, loosening cakes from the sides of pans, removing the first brownie, and swirling or marbling batters.

Standing mixer: Even though a standing electric mixer is big and a bit expensive, every home baker or baking enthusiast should have one with at least the three basic attachments: whisk, paddle, and dough hook. I have had my KitchenAid mixer for thirteen years, and it has never given me one problem.

Tart pans: I use several sizes of tart pans in the book for variety; however, you do not have to own this many to use the recipes (all the tart recipes herein offer pan substitutions where applicable). Tart pans have a removable bottom that makes it easier to remove the tart from its pan. When storing mini tart pans, we suggest layering them between sheets of paper towels or parchment paper to make sure they do not stick together while nesting.

Whisk: Home chefs should not worry themselves about owning the many varied types of whisks on the market. I used a basic wire whisk with a wooden handle (medium to large size will do) for every recipe that calls for whisking. These are great tools for combining dry ingredients (mixing flour, baking soda, and salt together, for instance), but do not use your whisk as an all-purpose stirring device (a silicone spatula works better); you can accidentally whisk too much air into your batters.

TERMS AND BRAND RECOMMENDATIONS



CHOCOLATE

It is imperative when making a chocolate-based dessert to use the best possible chocolate. If you plan on doing a lot of baking, it may be more cost-effective to purchase larger blocks of chocolate online or at local specialty stores. Luckily, in recent years, it has gotten easier to find good-quality chocolate at even the supermarket. The recipes in this book were tested using Callebaut Divine and Scharffen Berger chocolate, and I highly recommend both.

Of course, there are many other wonderful brands of chocolate to choose from, and as you get more familiar with them, you will start to align yourself with a few favorites. See [Sources](#) section for a complete list of where to buy them.

Chocolate percentages: The percentage label on a bar of chocolate is confusing. One brand's 64 percent chocolate bar is often completely different from another brand's 64 percent bar. The percentage is really referring to the cocoa mass in the bar itself, but the proportions of sugar, milk solids, and any other ingredients can be wildly different. While I could write an entire chapter on this subject, it is perhaps easier to recommend the following bars for this book's recipes (see chart [below](#)).

Cocoa powder: Every recipe in this book is made with Valrhona cocoa powder. It is deep, dark, and delicious. Don't get too caught up in the Dutched (cocoa powder treated with alkali) versus natural debate. Instead, pay more attention to the color and smell of the cocoa powder. Some mass-produced cocoas are almost gray—avoid them. If you can't find Valrhona, look for a dark-colored cocoa. I never use sweetened cocoa in this book (or for that matter, any other time).

Melting chocolate in a double boiler: A double boiler is a great way to melt chocolate or chocolate and butter together. To create one, you need a medium-sized pan or saucepan filled with water, and a (preferably metal) bowl that will sit partway inside the pan without touching the water. The chocolate (or delicate sauce) goes in the top pan, and the idea is that you are less apt to burn chocolate in this manner. Most double-boilers are warmed over low to low-medium heat.

Coffee Extract: Pure coffee extract is essentially coffee in concentrated form, and it is usually found in the baking section of most supermarkets. Nielsen Massey makes a wonderful version that imparts smooth, never bitter, coffee taste. I use it in both the [Chocolate Coffee Cake](#) and the [Coffee Ice Cream](#), though you will find many other uses for it, too (like whipped cream, marshmallows, or hot fudge, for example).

Vanilla Paste: I am a big fan of Nielsen Massey's Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Bean Paste. The paste is thick and fragrant and contains real vanilla bean seeds that give light-colored frostings, fillings, and icings a wonderful speckled appearance. Generally speaking, vanilla bean paste is slightly more concentrated than extract but it can be substituted evenly with pure vanilla extract. You could also use slightly less paste.

Salt: In recent years there has been an explosion in salt sophistication. Salt now comes in many forms, sizes, and colors. In order to streamline the recipes in this book, I broke down salt into two categories:

- * **Salt:** When I refer to salt in the book's recipes, I mean kosher salt. However, you can easily substitute table or iodized salt without a fear of ruining any recipe.
 - * **Sea Salt/Fleur de Sel:** In the instances when I refer to fleur de sel or sea salt, I suggest using a fine grained (or if it is your want, slightly chunky) fleur de sel. Lately, I have been partial to Le Sauni de Camargue brand (easily found on the Internet or at gourmet markets).
-

IF A RECIPE CALLS FOR A DARK CHOCOLATE OF 60 TO 72 PERCENT, USE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

Scharffen Berger's Home Baking Bar 62% (found in most supermarkets)

*

Scharffen Berger's Home Baking Bar 70% (found in most supermarkets)

*

Callebaut Chocolate Block 60% (found in specialty markets—often chopped and repackaged by the market)

*

Callebaut Chocolate Block 70% (found in specialty markets—often chopped and repackaged by the market)

*

Divine 70% Dark Chocolate (Fair Trade)

IF A RECIPE CALLS FOR A MILK CHOCOLATE, USE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

Jacques Torres Milk Chocolate Bar (found in specialty markets and online)

*

Scharffen Berger Milk Chocolate Bar 41% (found in most supermarkets)

TWO POWDERED FLAVORINGS

Though I have been playing with various flavored powders of late (I was given a few jars of flavored powders that look much better than they taste), I am still uniquely partial to my tried-and-true standbys: instant espresso powder and malted milk powder.

Instant espresso powder: This is not interchangeable with ground espresso beans. Instant espresso powder is intended to dissolve easily and is great for most baking applications. It can be used to cut sweetness, accentuate chocolate flavor, and heighten the coffee-like taste of your pastries. Ground espresso beans will not dissolve and can give your baked goods a grainy texture. I used Medaglia d'Oro brand espresso powder in testing all these recipes.

Malted milk powder: Primarily still used to make soda-fountain drinks, this is one of our favorite ingredients. We think its tangy, nutty flavor enhances both vanilla- and chocolate-based desserts. My favorite brand is Carnation malt, which is carried in most grocery stores, but if you can't find that, Ovaltine chocolate malt drink mix can be used as well.

TWO IMPORTANT TECHNIQUES

The world of pastry relies heavily on a vast array of proper “techniques.” My pastry world, and this book, are dominated by these two: folding and sifting.

Folding: When a recipe calls for folding, this means the act of gently mixing two parts of a batter together—no fast stirring, no whisking. The best way to do it is to use a rubber or silicone spatula and concentrate on turning the bottom part of the batter (often the heavier part) into the top part of the batter (often the lighter part) by scraping the sides of the bowl, then sweeping and twisting inward.

Sifting: Only a few recipes in this book require dry ingredients to be sifted. Sifting is the act of adding air to the dry ingredients to produce lighter cakes and baked goods. To do it, I recommend shaking the ingredients through a large sieve. Sieves are less expensive and easier to clean than the special sifting knickknacks on the market today. Besides, they have many other uses, while a sifter has only one.





BREAKFAST

MONKEY BUBBLE BREAD

PUMPKIN CHEDDAR MUFFINS

FARM STAND BUTTERMILK DOUGHNUTS THREE WAYS

NUTELLA SCONES

CARROT COCONUT SCONES WITH CITRUS GLAZE

BAKED CHEESE GRITS

MOM'S OLIVE OIL ORANGE BUNDT

OATMEAL CHOCOLATE CHIP CAKE WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

HONEY CORN MUFFINS

NEW YORK-STYLE CRUMB CAKE

CORNMEAL GRIDDLE CAKES

MALTED WAFFLES

BAKED FRENCH TOAST

DOUBLE-CHOCOLATE LOAF WITH PEANUT BUTTER CREAM CHEESE SPREAD

Breakfast, or the concept of a “proper breakfast,” can be unpredictable. I like it that way. When I feel inspired, I like rummaging around the pantry and refrigerator for unexpected muffin, scone, or pancake ingredients. I might use up some fresh fruit, chop some chocolate, stir in a bit of brandy, or break apart a stale baguette. When I am feeling less ambitious, I might just reheat leftover macaroni and cheese, or grab a bagel from the local deli, or both. I leave myself open to either option—I consider myself a breakfast optimist, and I never plan in advance.

It’s not that I am blasé about breakfast. Actually, I am quite a breakfast advocate; I just never structure the meal like I might a lunch for friends or a large dinner party. I have never “dressed” for breakfast (a frightening idea!), and I don’t enjoy the idea of sitting formally at a table in the morning. I prefer to fly solo for my first meal of the day, and most likely I am hunched over the morning news, be it on my laptop or the daily paper.

My carefree roll-out-of-bed-and-grab-your-own-breakfast attitude is largely a part of my upbringing. Mom encouraged the scour-and-devour breakfast scenario that still is part my daily routine. On occasion we were treated to last-minute innovations like a spruced-up muffin mix (usually loaded with butterscotch or chocolate chips) or a pancake burdened with more toppings than a tricked-out ice cream sundae. Other times, it was a simple store-bought, and probably not very good, coffee cake. My breakfast never looked like the hearty abundance of a tweaked-and-Photoshopped Denny’s picture menu.

While digging for this book, I unearthed more recipes for breakfast than any other section. People are passionate about their first meal of the day, and the nostalgia runs deep—deeper than with most recipes. I whittled the written and oral submissions down, keeping to the sweeter side of things, and edited them down again by preserving the items that felt the most homey without being too kitsch. I can honestly say that I had the hardest time regulating myself with breakfast during the book’s testing phase. One time I lost self-control, nearly consuming half a loaf of [Monkey Bubble Bread](#) all by my lonesome. The other recipes in this chapter are equally delicious. I still daydream about the [Double-Chocolate Loaf](#) with Peanut Butter Cream Cheese Spread. It is a rewarding and handsome breakfast loaf with a sinful flair. [Mom’s Olive Oil Orange Bundt](#) is coffee-klatch heaven, and the [Malted Waffles](#) are a great excuse to use your waffle iron. If you are one of those rare anti-sweet breakfast people, I recommend the [Baked Cheese Grits](#). Actually, I recommend the cheese grits no matter what. Have a great breakfast.



MONKEY BUBBLE BREAD

I SUGGEST ONLY MAKING THIS FROM-SCRATCH BREAD IF YOU ARE HAVING A LARGE GATHERING. Otherwise, you could end up (like me) eating more than you should. Simply put, this is addictive stuff. I liken these warm, gooey bread balls to the most amazing glazed doughnut hole you have ever had. There are several recipes floating about for monkey bread that use canned biscuit dough, but I ask you to kindly refrain from this expedient fix because the result won't be as tasty, and it is more expensive. The origin of the name monkey bread or bubble bread is quite hard to pinpoint, and while many dubious answers exist (the bread resembles a monkey puzzle tree or monkeys love to pull things apart), none of them are definitive, and some are cloyingly cute. I hate cloyingly cute. Suffice it to say that the source of the name is just one of life's great mysteries, and we should leave it at that.

←—————→
YIELD: ONE 10-INCH BUNDT
←—————→

Ingredients

FOR THE MONKEY BUBBLE BREAD

1¼ cups whole milk
2 teaspoons instant yeast
4 cups all-purpose flour
5 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

FOR THE CINNAMON SUGAR COATING

1¼ cups firmly packed dark brown sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled



MAKE THE MONKEY BUBBLE BREAD

Generously spray the inside of a 10-inch Bundt pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a small saucepan, warm your milk to slightly above room temperature, then remove it from the heat, add the yeast, and whisk to dissolve. (Do not warm it beyond 110 degrees F or you will kill the yeast).

In the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the flour, sugar, and salt until combined.

In a small bowl, beat the egg with a fork and add it to the dry ingredients. Mix on low speed until combined.

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