

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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What Difference the Flour Makes

As more and more cooking goes 'gourmet', recipes are becoming more specific about ingredients. Cake flour, semolina, pastry flour, graham flour, there are recipes that specify each of these. What difference does it make if I don't have cake flour and use all-purpose flour? Here's a quick rundown of the differences.

The largest part of a wheat kernel is starch with a little protein. Around the outside is the bran. The germ is the part that grows into a new plant. It has most of the vitamins, minerals and some oil. Most flour is made from just the starchy part.

All-purpose flour is the most common. It can be used to make most kinds of baked goods as well as noodles. It's usually a blend of several kinds of wheat, and the amount of protein in it can vary quite a bit.

Bread flour is made from wheat with a high protein content. Protein is what helps dough stick together, so that we can enjoy a slice of bread that does not crumble. Some bread flour has had ascorbic acid, or Vitamin C, added to increase the strength of the protein.

Cake flour is just the opposite. It's made from soft wheat with low protein. We want cake to be tender and delicate, not strong like bread. Cake flour is usually ground to be extra fine, almost silky in texture, to make the cake or cookies very smooth. If a recipe calls for cake flour and you have all purpose, sift the all purpose, measure each cup, then remove 2 tablespoons from each cup. If you want, you can add 2 tablespoons of corn starch to replace the flour, but most recipes work fine without it.

Self-rising flour is all purpose flour with baking powder and salt added. To make your own self-rising flour add 1 ½ teaspoons of baking powder and 1/8 teaspoon of salt to each cup of flour.

Pastry flour is made from soft wheat. It has less protein than all purpose flour, but more than cake flour. It is ground to a finer texture and lighter consistency, so it is good for making cookies, cakes and crackers. While all purpose flour can be used in most recipes, for a more exact substitution use 3/4 cup of all purpose flour, add 1 more Tbsp of all purpose and 3 Tbsp of cake flour for each cup called for in the recipe.

Semolina is ground more coarsely than most flours. It is made from hard wheat with a high protein content. It is usually pale yellow instead of white. If it is very coarse it is called couscous, and is boiled and eaten like rice. More finely ground semolina is called Durum flour, and used for making pasta. Only a few specialty breads, usually Italian, are made from semolina flour.

Gluten flour has had some of the starch removed, so that it is almost half protein. It is usually added to other flours to make better bread, although some gluten bread is made. Gluten is the protein that people with celiac disease can not tolerate.

All of those flours are made with just the starchy part of the kernel. When the bran and germ are included whole wheat flour is produced. Depending on how it is ground and how coarse it is, whole wheat flour is also called graham or stone-ground. There is practically no difference in nutritional values among them, and no changes are needed in a recipe to substitute one for another.

Most recipes can be made with half whole wheat and half all purpose flour. If you want 100% whole wheat take out 1 Tbsp from each cup of flour in the recipe.

Here's a recipe for orange muffins, just the thing for a Sunday brunch or after

school snack for the children. Use half whole wheat flour for a little extra nutrition. Yum!

Orange Muffins

½ C grated orange rind

½ C sugar

2 C sifted flour

2 tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

4 Tbsp vegetable oil

¼ tsp baking soda

1 C orange juice

4 Tbsp sugar

1 egg, well beaten

Grease or line 16 muffin cups with papers. Preheat oven to 425° F.

Combine ½ C sugar and orange rind in saucepan with ¼ C water. Cook slowly for 5 min, stirring. Remove from heat, add oil, juice and egg. Sift flour, baking powder and soda, salt and sugar together. Add orange mixture, stir just enough to moisten. Batter will still be lumpy. Fill muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake for 20 to 25 min. Serve warm.

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