

**Time-saving
baking
shortcuts**



'Tis the season for baking cookies, cakes and other treats. However, during the holiday rush it's easy to get side-tracked or tired, and perhaps even a little bit overwhelmed at all the things to do in such a short period of time. Holiday baking doesn't have to add to seasonal stress. With these several tips and shortcuts, there will be plenty of sweet treats.

Stick with tested recipes

Although holiday bakers may want to branch out a bit with their culinary creativity, recipes that have previously been prepared with great success can take out some of the work. Preparing recipes you recall preparing in the past is much easier than trying something new. If you'd like, add sparkle to old standards, such as oatmeal or chocolate chip cookies with colored sprinkles.

Cookies are fast-baking

Did you know that cookies were originally made to test oven temperatures? Culinary historians say that cookies were first made to test whether an oven was hot enough to bake other goods. Today, cookies can be whipped up in mere minutes. Make a batch of dough and then freeze or refrigerate it, thawing it when the time comes to bake. Also, think about baking one day and decorating the next if pressed for time.

Embrace coloured candy melts

Icing can be tricky to master. Simply heating

coloured candy melts and pouring over cakes or painting onto cookies can add festive appeal to desserts. Candy melts even come in many different colors and can be combined to achieve the tint desired.

Keep ingredients in top form

Don't let poorly performing ingredients or lack of supplies be your undoing. Butter can be softened quickly in the microwave when needed for recipes. Eggs can be brought to room temperature by allowing them to sit in a bowl of warm water. Ensure that brown sugar stays soft by putting a piece of sliced bread in the container. Don't forget to stock up on other baking staples, such as vanilla and almond extracts, baking powder/soda, molasses, and confectioner's sugar.

Don't bake from scratch

Every recipe does not need to be made from scratch. Boxed cake mixes can be embellished and turned into delicious desserts without much fuss. Substitute melted butter for oil, buttermilk for water, and add an extra egg for a rich cake. Mix in chocolate chips or nuts, or experiment with garnishes for a festive look.

Parchment paper is key

Line cookie sheets or cake pans with parchment paper for easy dessert release and quick cleanup. Parchment paper and even foil can help lift cakes or cookie bars out so they look neat and do not stick.

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