



January Recipes with Helen Huber Quick Breads

My mom did all the inside cooking except on Sunday mornings. Dad would break out his mother's round stovetop griddle. He'd mix up Aunt Jemima's pancakes from the box. My sister and I, and our beagle--Princess, would wait with growing anticipation. We knew what to expect when Mom cooked: delicious food with no cooking excitement. Dad was a different story.

Mixed ingredients all had rhyming names. Orange and grape juice was a Helen-roony-toony. Aunt Jemima pancake mix with vanilla extract was a Susie-pancakey-awakey! Although Princess didn't have anything named for her, she knew what she could expect. And she was never disappointed.

Dad would get batter onto the greased griddle. It would sizzle and dad would explain what the pancakes were saying. He alone spoke Pancake and could translate and cook ... at the same time! We were so proud. But the best was yet to come. At some point the pancakes needed to turn and Dad would dramatically flip them in the air.

Decades later, I reflect why it happened this way every Sunday, but at the time we waited patiently. The pancakes would leave the griddle. Princess would be perched and ready, recognizing her moment of glory just ahead. Normally squat and lumbering, the beagle would transform at the exact moment the pancakes were in the air, leaping and grabbing a pancake, then quickly running behind the couch where we couldn't reach her until the pancake was gone. We would scream with delight and Dad would pretend to be indignant. She only ever got one and, in retrospect, it certainly must have been hot. But the airborne pancake and beagle connecting is an image I've held for over six decades.

These quick bread recipes may or may not be less dramatic in their production. But I hope something memorable is left for you and yours.



Quick Breads

Quick breads are made without yeast and use some combination of baking soda and/or baking powder. They are called quick because they're (comparatively) quick to prepare and can be baked immediately after mixing rather than waiting hours for yeast to rise.

There are three types of quick breads with recipes for each.

- **Pour batters** have equal amounts of dry to liquid ingredients which allows it to be poured from the mixing bowl. It makes a moist and dense product. Pour batters include things like pancake and waffle batters.
- **Drop batters** have three parts of dry ingredients to one part liquid. The batter is thicker and needs to be scraped from the bowl. It produces a moist and fluffy product. Drop batters include things like muffins, biscuits, loaves, and coffee cake.
- **Stiff dough batters** have seven parts of dry ingredients to one part of liquid ingredients.. The batter is firm enough to roll and shape by hand. It produces a light and fluffy baked good. Stiff dough batters include things like biscuits and scones.

Pour Batter : Corn Pancakes

(Adapted from Bob's Red Mill Corn Flour)

Dry Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cup corn flour (not cornmeal)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon chili powder (as spicy as you like)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda

Wet Ingredients:

- 1 cup room temperature buttermilk (full fat if possible)
- 2 large, room temperature eggs
- 6 tablespoons melted butter, cooled slightly

Mix-Ins:

- 2 cups fresh or frozen, thawed corn kernels
- ¼ cup diced onion (any color)
- 2 tablespoons minced jalapeno (optional)

Oil for Cooking: ¼ cup neutral oil (I like avocado oil.)

Preparation:

1. In a medium bowl combine dry ingredients.
2. In another medium bowl, break and beat both eggs. Add buttermilk, then melted butter. Combine well.
3. Pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients. Add mix-ins. Stir together with a rubber spatula until mixed. Don't overmix!
4. Heat oil in a large skillet or griddle until it is shimmering. Working in batches, ladle about ⅓ cup batter per pancake.
5. Cook for 3-5 minutes per side until golden. Remove pancakes to a paper towel or cloth-lined plate.
6. Keep warm in a 200 degree oven, if eating right away. Pancakes can be refrigerated or frozen and reheated.



Drop Batter: Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins

Makes 12 regular muffins or 24 mini-muffins.



These are even more delicious after a day or two. They are delicious anytime though.

This recipe uses ½ can of pumpkin. You can double the recipe and use the whole can or freeze the remaining pumpkin for future muffins. I give out mini-muffins in bags for all Thanksgiving guests.

Dry Ingredients:

- 1 ⅔ cup unbleached flour
- 1 cup granulated (white) sugar
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice (see note below for making your own pumpkin pie spice mix)
- ¼ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Wet Ingredients:

- 2 large room temperature eggs
- 8 oz. pumpkin (half of a can of pumpkin, not pumpkin pie mix)
- ½ cup (1 stick butter) melted

Mix-in

1 cup (6 oz.) chocolate chips (Choose the kind of chip your people like such as milk chocolate, white chocolate, semi-sweet or dark chocolate. Combining chip types hasn't worked for me in this recipe.)

Preparation:

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Either grease a 12-cup muffin tin with melted butter or a neutral oil, or use a paper cupcake/muffin liner.
2. Mix dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Use a larger bowl if the recipe is doubled. Add chips. Stir to coat chips with dry ingredients. This keeps chips from sinking to the bottom of your muffin.
3. Break and beat eggs in a smaller bowl. Add pumpkin and butter and whisk/stir until blended.
4. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients and fold together with a rubber spatula just until the ingredients are mixed. Use a folding movement sliding your rubber spatula under the bottom of the bowl and over the top, repeating the giant arc until ingredients are mixed. Overmixing makes tough muffins! Mix until just combined.
5. Spoon equal amounts of batter into muffin cups. Lightly place some chips on top of each muffin for a superior-looking muffin..
6. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until puffed and springy to the touch in the center of the muffin. A toothpick inserted in the middle of the muffin should come out without wet batter.
7. Allow the muffins to cool for at least 15 minutes. Turn onto a cooling rack and continue cooling or serve. Store in an airtight container once cool. Reheated muffins are yummiier than room temperature muffins but these are delicious any way they go from the plate to you.
8. Store in an airtight container.

**** **Note:** Make your own pumpkin pie spice by combining: ****

- 3 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice

Stiff Dough: Batter Scones

(adapted from Sally's Baking Addiction)



Ingredients:

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups unbleached white flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch (not cornmeal; if you don't have any cornstarch, substitute flour- Cornstarch gives a lovely, light texture)
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar (white, brown, coconut, maple (not syrup) etc.) plus about 2 tablespoons for sprinkling over the scones before baking
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) frozen butter, grated on the large or medium holes of a box grater. You might grate two sticks halfway which is easier.)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup buttermilk, heavy cream, or canned coconut milk (for the vegans) , shaken well + 2 tablespoons for brushing on the top of the scones before baking
- 1 large egg, cold
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract or vanilla paste
- 1- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mix-ins: frozen fruit (break up into pieces. Don't add a frozen giant hunk of fruit), fresh fruit chopped into chunks, chocolate chips, nuts etc.

Preparation:

1. Whisk flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder together in a large bowl.
2. Add the grated butter to the flour mixture and combine with your clean fingers, a pastry cutter, or two forks until the mixture comes together in pea-sized crumbs. Place in the refrigerator or freezer as you mix the wet ingredients together.
3. Whisk buttermilk, coconut milk, or cream with the egg and vanilla extract in a small bowl.
4. Drizzle the wet ingredients over the flour mixture, add the mix-ins, then mix together until everything is just combined. Don't overmix. Use a rubber spatula to scoop and mix in a giant arc.

Shape your scones:

To make triangle scones: Empty the scone mixture onto the counter and with floured hands, work dough into a ball as best you can. Dough will be sticky. If it's too sticky, add a little more flour. If it seems too dry, add 1-2 more tablespoons of buttermilk, cream etc.. Press into an 8-inch disc and, with a sharp knife or bench scraper, cut into 8 wedges. For smaller scones: Press dough into two 5-inch discs and cut each into 8 wedges.

To make 10-12 drop scones:(Nice if you like craggy edges and tops) Mix dough in the bowl until it just comes together. Drop about 1/4 cup of scone dough about 3 inches apart on a lined baking sheet.

5. Brush scones with the 2 tablespoons of buttermilk, cream or coconut milk. You could substitute a beaten egg or egg yolk, if you prefer which will be more golden. Wipe your brush on the side of the bowl that holds your brushing liquid. The goal is to lightly coat the top, not wet the scones into a gloppy situation.
6. Sprinkle with sugar. I like sparkling sugar but any sugar will do if you prefer this optional step. (Do this just before baking.)
7. Preheat oven to 400°F.
8. Place scones on a plate or lined baking sheet (if your fridge has space!) and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. This chilling time allows the scones to firm up and not spread as much.
9. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone baking mat(s). If making mini or drop scones, use 2 baking sheets. After refrigerating, arrange scones 2-3 inches apart on the prepared baking sheet(s) so they have room to rise/expand while baking.
10. Bake for 18-26 minutes or until golden brown around the edges and lightly browned on top. Larger scones take closer to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for a few minutes.

Leftover scones keep well at room temperature for 2 days or in the refrigerator for 5 days. You can freeze unbaked scones, then bake them longer or thaw them in the refrigerator overnight. When ready to bake, let them sit on the counter while the oven comes to temperature, then bake until done, adding a little more time for them to bake.