

The Bakely Starter Manual

BAKELY BAKEHOUSE

the new baker's handbook

Baking that actually works.

Where to begin

From zero to your first cinnamon rolls. Read the handbook chapters, then work the Ten-Bake Ladder in order — each bake teaches the skill the next one uses. Every recipe is written the Bakely way: clear steps, the why explained, and no jargon. By bake ten, the whole archive is yours.

Welcome — read this first

This manual has one job: to take you from "I can't bake" to "what should I bake next?" It isn't a recipe pile — it's a path. Read the short chapters, then work the Ten-Bake Ladder in order. Each bake teaches a skill the next one uses, and by the tenth you'll have every core technique in home baking. You don't need talent. You need a scale, an oven, and the patience to follow steps that actually explain themselves. That part is our job.

The kit that matters (and the kit that doesn't)

Essential: a digital scale (the single biggest upgrade to your baking — cups lie, grams don't), an oven thermometer (most ovens run 10-20C off what the dial says), a 900g loaf tin, a 20cm square tin, two 20cm round tins, a baking tray, baking paper, a mixing bowl, a whisk, a spatula, a wooden spoon and a wire rack. That's it.

Nice later, not now: a stand mixer, a food processor, piping kit, a dough scraper, fancy silicone anything. Every recipe on the Ladder can be made with the essentials and your hands.

Ingredients, decoded

Flour: plain (all-purpose) has no raising agent; self-raising is plain plus baking powder; strong (bread) flour has more protein for chewy, stretchy doughs.

They are not interchangeable — the recipe names the one it needs.

Raising agents: baking powder works on its own; bicarbonate of soda needs an acid (buttermilk, lemon, yoghurt) to fire. Both die quietly in the cupboard — replace them yearly.

Butter: 'softened' means bends-without-breaking, not shiny. 'Cold' means straight from the fridge and cut into cubes. The temperature is part of the recipe.

Eggs: medium unless stated. Room temperature blends better — 10 minutes in warm water fixes fridge-cold eggs.

Sugar: caster dissolves fast (cakes), granulated is coarser, soft brown brings moisture and toffee notes, icing sugar is for icing. Again: the recipe names what it needs for a reason.

The words recipes use

Cream: beat softened butter and sugar until visibly paler and fluffy — 3-4 minutes, longer than feels right. This traps the air your cake rises on.

Fold: combine gently with a spatula, cutting down the middle and turning the bowl, keeping the air in. Stop at 'just combined'.

Rub in: squash cold butter into flour with fingertips until it looks like breadcrumbs. Cold hands, light touch.

Knead: stretch dough away with the heel of your hand, fold back, quarter-turn, repeat. It's rhythm, not violence.

Prove: let a yeast dough rest and rise. It's done when a floured finger-poke springs back slowly and leaves a slight dent.

Just combined: the moment no dry flour is visible. For muffins, scones and quick breads, stop there — every extra stir toughens them.

Know your oven

All our temperatures are for fan ovens. No fan? Add 15-20C. Buy the £5 oven thermometer and learn your oven's truth once — it will explain years of mysteries.

Preheat properly: 10-15 minutes, until the thermometer says so, not the light. The door stays shut for the first two-thirds of any bake. Opening it drops the heat 20-30C in seconds and sinks cakes.

Middle shelf unless told otherwise. And ovens have hot spots — if one side always browns first, turn the tin (quickly, late in the bake).

Done tests: a skewer into a cake's centre comes out clean or with a few moist crumbs; bread sounds hollow when knocked underneath; cookies look slightly underdone in the middle when you pull them — they finish on the tray.

When it goes wrong (it will, and it's fine)

Cake sank in the middle: oven door opened too early, or underbaked, or too much raising agent. Skewer test before it comes out.

Dense, heavy cake: butter and sugar not creamed long enough, or the flour was beaten in rather than folded.

Cookies spread into one giant sheet: dough too warm. Chill 30 minutes before baking, always.

Scones like rocks: the dough was overworked. Handle it like it owes you money and you want it to pay: barely.

Bread didn't rise: yeast was dead (test it in warm water — it should foam) or the liquid was hot enough to kill it. Lukewarm means wrist-warm.

Soggy-bottomed pastry or crumble: oven not hot enough, or the dish went in on a cold shelf. A preheated baking tray under the dish is the cheat.

Burnt outside, raw inside: oven runs hot — thermometer, then trust it, and drop 10-15C next time.

Conversions & swaps you'll actually use

Grams to remember: 1 tbsp butter $\approx$ 15g · 1 tbsp flour $\approx$ 8g · 1 tbsp sugar $\approx$ 12.5g · 1 medium egg $\approx$ 50g out of shell.

Tins: going from a 20cm round to 23cm? The cake will be shallower — check it 5-10 minutes early. Square tin holds about 25% more than the same-size round.

No buttermilk? 1 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar into 250ml milk, wait 5 minutes.

Works every time and no one has ever tasted the difference.

No self-raising flour? Per 150g plain flour, whisk in 2 tsp baking powder.

Fan to conventional: add 15-20C. Celsius to gas mark: 160C fan $\approx$ gas 4, 180C fan $\approx$ gas 6, roughly.

The Ten-Bake Ladder

Here it is — ten bakes, in order, each one teaching the next one's skill.

Flapjacks (melting and mixing, zero risk). Chocolate chip cookies (creaming, chilling, tray discipline). Buttermilk scones (rubbing in, light hands). White soda bread (a whole loaf, no yeast, no fear). Banana loaf (mashing, folding, the skewer test). Blueberry muffins (the 'just combined' rule, for life). Fudgy brownies (melting chocolate, trusting a soft middle). Victoria sponge (creaming mastered, your first layer cake). White tin loaf (yeast at last: kneading and proving). Cinnamon rolls (enriched dough, rolling, filling — the graduation bake).

Bake them in order. Don't skip. By number ten, the entire archive is yours.

The Ten-Bake Ladder — the recipes

1. Honey flapjack bites · [Tray bakes](#)
2. Chocolate chip cookies · [Cookies](#)
3. Irish buttermilk scones · [Scones](#)
4. White soda bread · [Bread](#)
5. Banana loaf cake · [Loaf cakes](#)
6. Blueberry muffins · [Muffins](#)
7. Classic fudgy brownies · [Tray bakes](#)
8. Victoria sponge · [Layer cakes](#)
9. White tin loaf · [Bread](#)
10. Cinnamon rolls · [Buns & rolls](#)

Honey flapjack bites

35m · 16 bites

Soft, honeyed oat squares — one pan, one tin, hard to get wrong.

INGREDIENTS

- Butter 150 g
- Honey 4 tbsp
- Soft brown sugar 75 g
- Porridge oats 250 g
- Raisins 50 g

METHOD

1. **An** adult melts the butter, honey and sugar together.
2. **Stir** in the oats and raisins until coated.
3. **Press** into the lined tin and bake at 160C fan for 18-20 minutes until golden at the edges.
4. **Cool** 15 minutes, cut into 16, then cool fully in the tin.

***Chef's note** An adult melts; everyone stirs.*

Chocolate chip cookies

30m + chill · 18 cookies

Thick, chewy chocolate chip cookies with crisp edges and soft middles.

INGREDIENTS

- Plain flour 300 g
- Bicarbonate of soda 1 tsp
- Salt 1 tsp
- Butter, melted 170 g
- Light brown sugar 150 g
- Caster sugar 80 g
- Egg + 1 yolk 1 + 1
- Vanilla 1 tsp
- Dark chocolate chips 200 g

METHOD

1. **Brown** the melted butter in a pan over medium heat until it smells nutty and turns amber, then cool for 10 minutes — it's very hot.
2. **Whisk** in both sugars, then the egg, yolk and vanilla until glossy.
3. **Fold** in the flour, bicarb and salt, then the chocolate chips.
4. **Chill** the dough for at least 1 hour (or overnight) so the cookies hold their shape.
5. **Scoop** onto the lined trays, spacing well, and bake at 180C fan for 10-12 minutes until the edges are set but the centres still look soft.
6. **Leave** on the tray for 5 minutes to finish setting, then move to a rack.

***Chef's note** Weigh all the ingredients; take the egg out to reach room temperature.*

Irish buttermilk scones

30m · 8 scones

Tall, tender buttermilk scones the way Irish home bakers make them — light hands, hot oven.

INGREDIENTS

- Self-raising flour 350 g
- Cold butter, cubed 85 g
- Caster sugar 3 tbsps
- Fine salt 0.5 tsp
- Buttermilk 200 ml
- Egg, beaten, to glaze 1

METHOD

1. **Rub** the cold butter into the flour, sugar and salt until it looks like coarse crumbs.
2. **Stir** in the buttermilk with a knife until it just comes together — soft, slightly shaggy.
3. **Pat** out to 3cm thick, stamp out rounds without twisting the cutter, and set on a tray almost touching.
4. **Brush** with egg and bake at 200C fan for 12-14 minutes until risen and golden. Split, butter, jam.

***Chef's note** Cold butter and a hot oven are the whole game.*

White soda bread

50m · 1 loaf

The everyday white soda loaf — four ingredients, no yeast, warm bread inside an hour.

INGREDIENTS

- Plain flour 450 g
- Bicarbonate of soda 1 tsp
- Fine salt 1 tsp
- Buttermilk 400 ml

METHOD

1. **Mix** the flour, bicarbonate of soda and salt in a large bowl.
2. **Add** the buttermilk and bring together quickly to a soft dough — no kneading, or it toughens.
3. **Shape** into a round on a floured tray and cut a deep cross in the top.
4. **Bake** at 200C fan for 35-40 minutes until golden and hollow-sounding underneath. Cool before slicing.

***Chef's note** Heat the oven to 200C fan before you start.*

Banana loaf cake

1h 15m · 1 loaf

A moist banana loaf cake finished with plain.

INGREDIENTS

- Soft butter 200 g
- Caster sugar 200 g
- Eggs 3
- Self-raising flour 200 g
- Baking powder 0.5 tsp
- Ripe banana, mashed 3

METHOD

1. **Cream** the butter and sugar until pale and fluffy, 2-3 minutes.
2. **Beat** in the eggs one at a time, then fold in the flour, baking powder and the flavourings until smooth.
3. **Spoon** into the lined tin, level the top, and bake at 160C fan for 45-55 minutes until a skewer comes out clean.
4. **Cool** in the tin for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a rack.
5. **Dust** with a little icing sugar to serve.

***Chef's note** Weigh everything; bring the butter and eggs to room temperature.*

Blueberry muffins

35m · 12 muffins

Soft, bakery-style blueberry muffins with a high domed top.

INGREDIENTS

- Plain flour 300 g
- Caster sugar 150 g
- Baking powder 2.5 tsp
- Salt 0.5 tsp
- Eggs 2
- Milk 240 ml
- Vegetable oil 90 ml
- Vanilla 1 tsp
- Blueberries 150 g

METHOD

1. **Whisk** the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt together in a large bowl.
2. **In** a jug, beat the eggs, milk, oil and vanilla. Pour into the dry mix and fold in the blueberries until only just combined — about 30 seconds; a few lumps are fine.
3. **Divide** between the cases and bake at 190C fan for 18-22 minutes, until risen and springy.
4. **Cool** in the tin for 5 minutes, then lift onto a wire rack.

***Chef's note** Weigh out every ingredient first — once mixed, muffin batter should go straight into the oven.*

Classic fudgy brownies

45m · 16 squares

Dense, fudgy classic fudgy brownies cut into squares.

INGREDIENTS

- Dark chocolate 200 g
- Butter 175 g
- Caster sugar 275 g
- Eggs 3
- Plain flour 110 g
- Cocoa powder 40 g
- Salt 0.5 tsp

METHOD

1. **Melt** the chocolate and butter together gently — a bowl over barely simmering water, or short bursts in the microwave — then cool slightly.
2. **Whisk** the sugar and eggs until thick and pale, about 3 minutes.
3. **Fold** in the melted chocolate, then the flour, cocoa and salt, then nothing extra.
4. **Pour** into the lined tin and bake at 170C fan for 25-30 minutes, until set on top with a slight wobble underneath.
5. **Cool** completely in the tin before cutting, for clean fudgy squares.

***Chef's note** Weigh all the ingredients before you start.*

Victoria sponge

55m · Serves 8

The queen of the tea table — equal-weights sponge, raspberry jam, cream, a snowfall of caster sugar.

INGREDIENTS

- Butter, softened 225 g
- Caster sugar 225 g
- Eggs 4
- Self-raising flour 225 g
- Milk 1-2 tbsp
- Raspberry jam 5 tbsp
- Double cream 200 ml
- Caster sugar, to finish 1 tbsp

METHOD

1. **Cream** the butter and sugar until genuinely pale and fluffy — this is where the lightness comes from.
2. **Beat** in the eggs one at a time, then fold in the flour with enough milk for a soft, dropping batter.
3. **Divide** between the lined tins and bake at 160C fan for 22-25 minutes until springy and shrinking from the sides.
4. **Cool** fully, sandwich with jam and softly whipped cream, and dust the top with caster sugar.

***Chef's note** Weigh your eggs in their shells and match the butter, sugar and flour to them — the old equal-weights rule.*

White tin loaf

3h · 1 loaf

Homemade white tin loaf with a proper crust and a soft crumb.

INGREDIENTS

- Strong white flour 500 g
- Water 320 ml
- Instant yeast 7 g
- Salt 10 g

METHOD

1. **Mix** the flour, yeast and salt in a bowl (keep the salt and yeast on opposite sides), add the liquid and bring together to a rough dough.
2. **Knead** for 8-10 minutes until smooth and elastic.
3. **Cover** and prove in a warm spot until doubled, about 1 hour.
4. **Knock** back, shape, and prove again for 45-60 minutes until puffy.
5. **Bake** at 220C fan for 25-30 minutes until deep golden and hollow-sounding; cool on a rack before slicing.

***Chef's note** Weigh the flour, water, yeast and salt accurately — bread is a ratio, not a guess.*

Cinnamon rolls

3h · 12 rolls

Soft enriched dough rolled with cinnamon sugar and finished with a cream cheese icing.

INGREDIENTS

- Strong white flour 500 g
- Instant yeast 7 g
- Caster sugar 60 g
- Salt 1 tsp
- Warm milk 250 ml
- Egg 1
- Butter, softened 60 g
- Soft brown sugar (filling) 80 g
- Cinnamon 2 tbsp
- Butter, softened (filling) 60 g
- Cream cheese (icing) 100 g
- Icing sugar (icing) 80 g

METHOD

1. **Mix** the flour, yeast, sugar and salt. Add the warm milk, egg and butter and bring to a dough; knead 8-10 minutes until smooth.
2. **Cover** and prove until doubled, about 1 hour.
3. **Roll** out to a large rectangle, spread with the filling butter and scatter with the brown sugar and cinnamon.
4. **Roll** up tightly, cut into 12 and place in the tin. Prove again for 30-45 minutes until puffy.
5. **Bake** at 180C fan for 22-25 minutes until golden. Cool a little, then spread with the beaten cream cheese and icing sugar.

***Chef's note** Warm — not hot — milk wakes the yeast without killing it.*