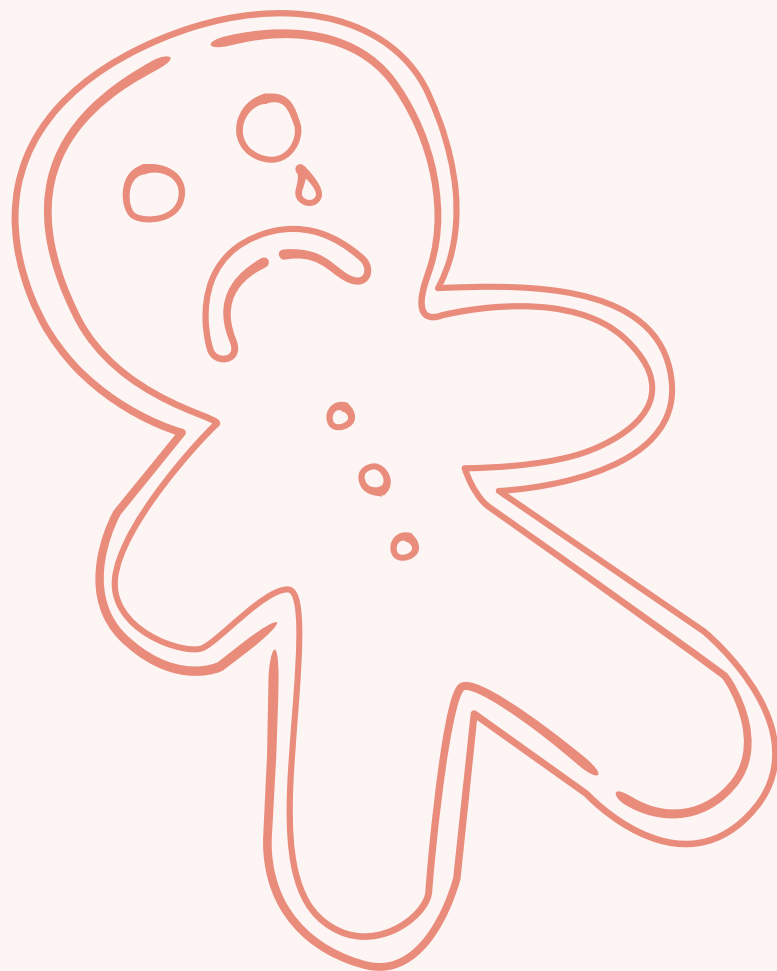


Totally Baked



The nine most common mistakes
home cooks make when baking

- Do you wish you were admired for your baking?
- Do you feel like no matter how much effort you put into your baking, it never quite meets your expectations?
- Do you think that baking is just too hard, messy or time consuming?
- Do you wonder if you're just not cut out for it?

In truth, everyone can bake. But, like most things, a little know-how goes a long way. To give you a head start, this booklet reveals nine of the most common mistakes that home cooks make when baking. They can mean the difference between the cake that rises and the one that sinks, the biscuits that have burnt bottoms and those that are perfectly golden, the disaster pie with the embarrassingly soggy pastry and the one that gets requested time and again.

Bear these mistakes in mind whenever you turn on your oven and you will be well on the road to beautiful baking.

Mistake No.1

Thinking you have to bake something 'fancy'

We all want to impress. We want to bake something fabulous, something that everybody will love. However, **fabulous doesn't have to mean complicated.** Recipes with lots of ingredients and/or elaborate techniques aren't always the memorable ones – well, not in a good way at least. Trust me, they are often the ones that will give you a headache in the kitchen and be far more trouble than they're worth.

A cinnamon teacake made with only six basic ingredients and finished with a simple sprinkling of sweet spice is far from complex, but is unfailingly wonderful – especially when it's served warm from the oven!

Don't over-complicate things and remember that simplicity, especially when you are baking, can be the key to an impressive offering.

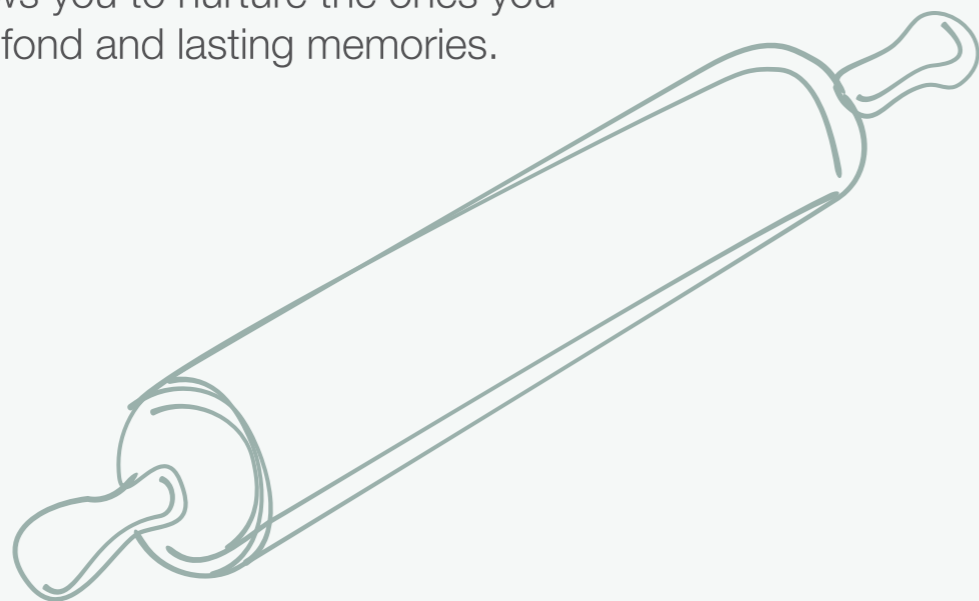


Mistake No.2

Thinking that baking isn't worth the effort

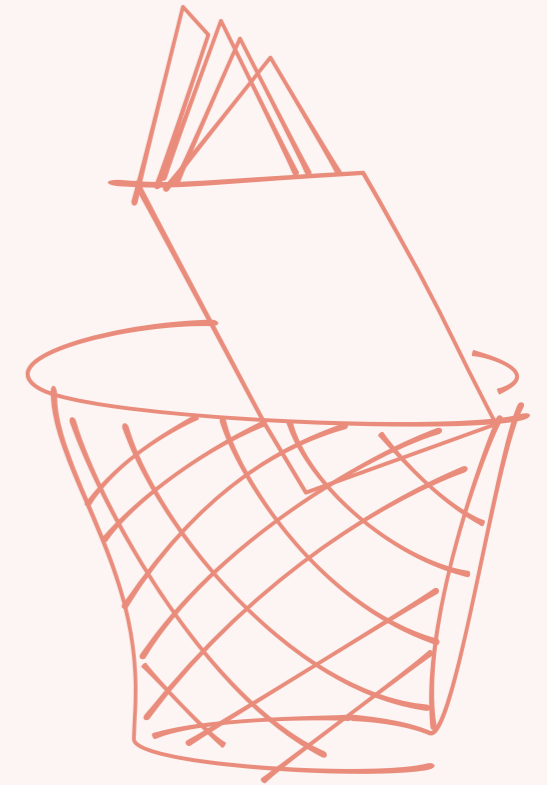
Sometimes people feel that baking at home is just not worth the effort. They see it as too time-consuming, too tricky, too expensive, too unhealthy, too messy. But it doesn't need to be. When you have the know-how to bake with confidence, it becomes faster, easier, less messy and is never a waste of time. It also enriches your life in more ways than you would expect. Baking allows you to:

- **LEARN** and then **SHARE** your baking knowledge – it nurtures conversations, inspires creativity and encourages discovery
- **VALUE** the quality of the food you eat and gives you an alternative to the commercially produced and additive-laden options
- **CONNECT** you with the food you eat and the people around you. Baking allows you to nurture the ones you love, and create fond and lasting memories.



Mistake No.3

Using a bad recipe



Believe it or not, there are a lot of terrible recipes out there. They can be confusing, missing important elements, contain ingredients that aren't balanced proportionally and/or have an odd combination of flavours. If you don't have a good recipe to start with, the results aren't likely to be spectacular. This is by no means a reflection of your baking ability and you shouldn't be disheartened.

Quite simply, bad recipe = disappointing result.

So how do you tell a good recipe from a bad one? **A good recipe will be easy to follow and never leave you feeling lost.** When you read through it, everything should be easy to understand and it should all make sense. If it doesn't, just avoid it.

It's wise to use recipes from reputable sources, such as books, magazines and newspapers. There are many websites and blogs with good recipes too, but you need to be discerning. Who wrote the recipe? Do you trust their ability? Can you source all the ingredients? Will you need to convert any measurements?

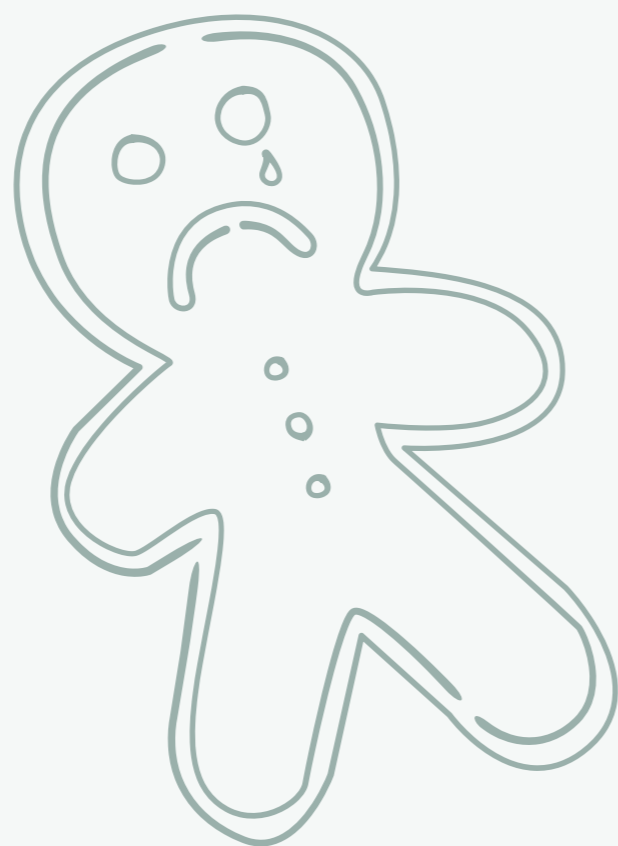
Also ask your friends and family where they get their favourite recipes from and when you find one you like, make a note of where it came from so you can easily come back to the source when you need another one.

Mistake No.4

Using a recipe that isn't appropriate

It is really important to choose a recipe that is not only appropriate to your baking ability, but also suited to the utensils and ingredients you have. Remember that good recipes don't have to be complicated - there are plenty of dead-easy baking recipes that use basic kitchen equipment and easily obtained ingredients to create something absolutely delicious.

You will always have greater success if you **choose a recipe that is well matched to your baking ability and supplies.** And remember, as your baking skills grow, so too will your repertoire of recipes.

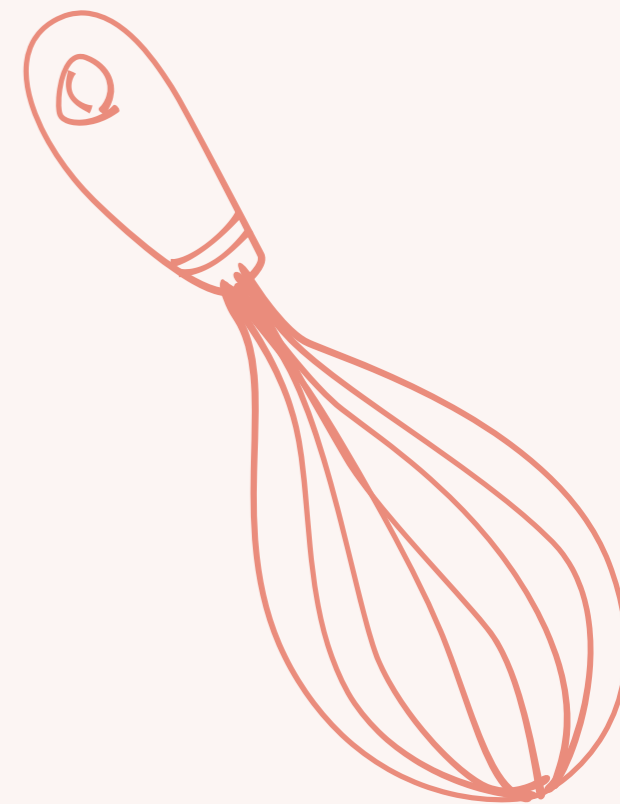


Mistake No.5

Not following the recipe

Every baking recipe is best followed from start to finish, especially if it is the first time you are making it. **Stay true to the recipe and try not to deviate until you are familiar with the results.** Measure ingredients accurately, preheat your oven properly, follow the method exactly, use the correct utensils, and set a timer so you know when to check if it's ready.

Substituting ingredients and cutting corners will often lead to a disappointing result. Once you are confident with the method and ingredients you can start making adjustments, but until then, stick with the original.





Mistake No.6

Starting to bake before you are ready

It's tempting to jump straight into a recipe, but getting organised before you start can often dictate whether a baking experience will be painful or pleasurable. It doesn't take long to get a few things sorted and by following these five simple steps you will be well on the way to brilliant baking:

- 1 Read through your recipe** – it's important to know what ingredients and equipment are called for, what sort of preparation you will need to do and how long the actual baking will take before you get started.
- 2 Adjust your oven racks** (if necessary) – make sure they are at the right level for the particular recipes you are baking before you preheat your oven.
- 3 Preheat the oven** – this is crucial. Make sure you set it to the required temperature at least 20 minutes before you use it.
- 4 Prepare your cake tins or baking trays** – always follow what has been specified in the recipe (greasing, lining and/or dusting with flour) to prevent sticking. There is nothing more frustrating than turning out a cake and finding the bottom half is still stuck to the tin.
- 5 Get out all your ingredients and equipment** – make a habit of doing this every time you cook (not only when you bake). It is more efficient as it saves you stopping every few minutes to get something out of the cupboard.

Mistake No.7

Underestimating the importance of measuring

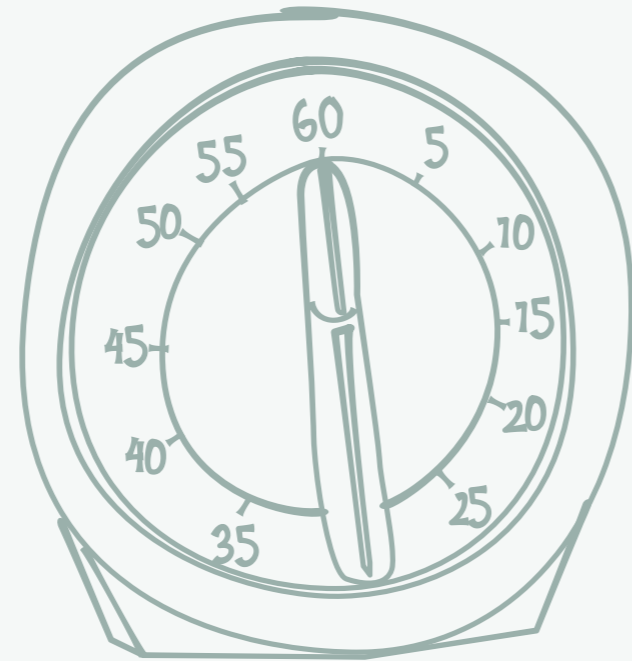
Baking is a science. Not a complicated one, but one that relies quite heavily on accuracy. Measuring ingredients and tins correctly is one of the most important things you can do to help ensure great results. **Use reliable scales, measuring jugs and/or standard measuring cups and spoons to measure your ingredients.**

Don't use Grandma's tea cup, a tablespoon from your cutlery drawer or try to estimate amounts (unless the recipe specifically asks you to) if you want to give your pastry, cake or bread the best chance of working.

Be mindful that here in Australia and New Zealand we use a 4 teaspoon (20ml) tablespoon, while recipes published in the UK and US use a 3 teaspoon (15ml) tablespoon. You can buy both 20ml and 15ml tablespoons, so take note of where the recipe you are making has come from and use the appropriate tablespoon measure.

Measuring baking tins is also important. Using a tin that's too big or too small can make a big difference to the cooking time and the end result. Keep a ruler handy and measure tins across the base and through the centre, unless otherwise specified. A good tip is to use a permanent marker to write the size of the tin on the base after measuring it so it is there for future reference.





Mistake No.8

Not using a timer

Always use a timer when baking – don't just 'keep an eye on the clock'. It is too easy to lose track of time, especially if you've started doing something else, such as making a phone call, gardening or helping with the kids' homework. Something as simple as forgetting to take the cake out of the oven at the right time can totally undo all the effort and care you poured into making it – all you're left with is a dry, slightly charred disc you couldn't serve anyone.

A portable digital timer is invaluable. It will be accurate, easy to set and, unlike your oven timer, can be taken wherever you go. Want to squeeze in a little gardening while your cake is cooking? No problem!

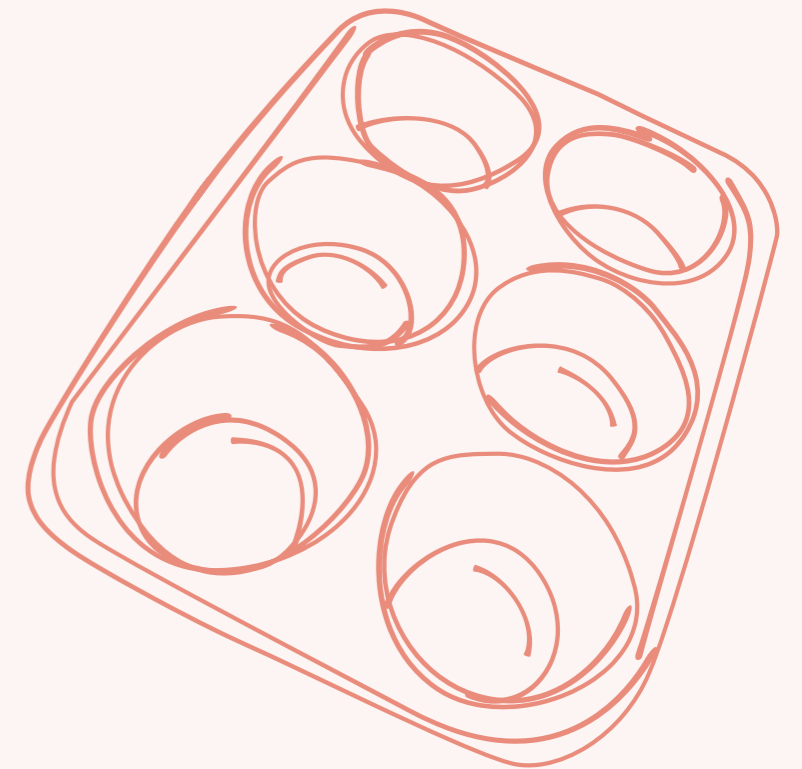
Mistake No.9

Getting disheartened when things don't work out

Unfortunately, things don't always work out the way you would like. Your cake may have a slightly heavy texture, a batch of biscuits isn't as crisp as the last lot you made or your quiche pastry may be a touch soggy. The main thing is not to lose heart.

A disappointing result could be due to a number of reasons, including all those I have already mentioned. Don't presume that you can't bake and, most importantly, don't stop baking. Try to work out what went wrong and give it another go. Knowing what you are aiming for, and what to avoid, is an important part of successful baking.

Remember, learning from your mistakes will make you a better baker in the long run.



About BakeClub

Founded by Sydney-based food author, mum of two and passionate baker Anneka Manning, *BakeClub* is a cooking school with a very big difference. We make baking fun, simple, inspiring and, above all, relevant to your life.

Through our unique approach we will teach you the basics of baking in an approachable and practical way so that you can develop the skills and know-how to bake with confidence.

Our simple and reliable recipes, tips and techniques mean that you will never waste time in the kitchen due to a baking disaster and our creative and delicious ideas will spark a lasting passion for baking.

Anneka's ultimate goal is to bring 'real' baking into your home. She will connect you with the magic of baking and, through this, help you nurture and connect with the people around you, especially those you love.



Join BakeClub today

Join us at one of BakeClub's informative, fun and inspiring workshop-style classes that make baking easy.

Our small group classes have been designed to introduce you to a specific baking topic in a fun and friendly atmosphere where recipes and ideas are shared, baking sticking points and 'fears' are overcome and loads of relevant hints and tips that you can take back to your own kitchen are learnt.

For more Information or if you would like to enquire about a private BakeClub workshop, specifically tailored for a group of friends or business colleagues please contact:

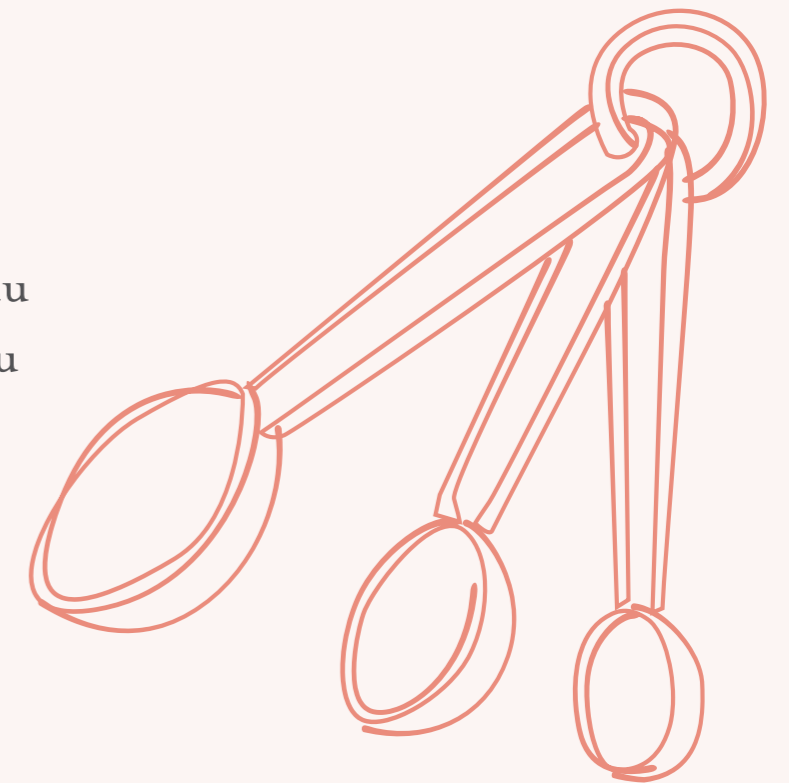
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Enjoy

