

SCONES

INFORMATION SHEET



BAKING INDUSTRY
RESEARCH TRUST

DEFINITION

Small, round, bread-like baked product usually split in half and served with butter, jam and cream as part of traditional morning or afternoon tea. A wide variety of sweet and savoury scones are made, including the popular flavours of cheese and sultana. Scones are known as biscuits in the USA.

HISTORY

Scones are believed to have originated in Scotland. Originally they were made from oats, shaped into a large round called a 'bannock', scored into four to six triangles known as scones, and cooked on a griddle either over an open fire or on top of the stove.

The origin of the name 'scone' is unclear, with sources suggesting it may link to the Stone (Scone) of Destiny where Kings of Scotland were crowned. Others believe the name is derived from the Dutch word "schoonbrood" ("schoon" meaning clean and "brood" meaning bread), or from the German word "schoonbrot" meaning 'fine or beautiful bread'.

With the invention of baking powder scones became the well leavened oven-baked product that they are today, quite different to the older griddle-cooked scones. Today, griddle scones are still listed as a variety of scone, only they are fried rather than baked.

INGREDIENTS

A quick bread, scones are made of wheat flour (white or wholemeal), sugar, baking powder, butter and milk. All the ingredients need to be measured carefully to avoid producing scones with a coarse or crumbly texture that don't rise.

| Ingredient | Function & specifications <i>(*Based on flour content.)</i> |
|---------------|--|
| Flour | A quality flour should be used. A combination of bread and cake flours are used by professional bakers while home bakers can choose biscuit or cake flour. A self-raising flour, which already includes baking powder and salt, is perfectly acceptable as long as these ingredients are not doubled up in the recipe. The amount of protein in the flour affects how flaky the scone will be. The higher the protein content the tougher the scone may be. A larger volume and darker crust results if made from soft wheat flour or biscuit flour. |
| Butter | Shortening or lard, traditional biscuit fats, and cold liquid ingredients will influence the flakiness, as well as inhibit gluten formation and will be more likely to produce a finely textured scone. The cold liquids keep the fat from melting. Butter gives a richer flavour. |
| Milk | The milk or liquid used can be varied depending on the end texture required. For example, replacing half milk with cream produces a heavier scone texture, while using buttermilk makes a lighter, more bread-like scone. Buttermilk has a nice thick creamy texture with a rich tangy buttery taste that makes baked goods tender, as well as lactic acid from buttermilk increasing the amount of carbon dioxide gas produced resulting in superior texture and volume. |
| Baking powder | Can be added separately or self-raising flour may be used. |
| Sugar | Sugar may be added for sweetness depending on the type of scone. Obviously for savoury scones it is usually omitted. |

INGREDIENTS

The correct mixing of the ingredients is crucial in producing an excellent scone.

In the home, scones are best mixed by hand to avoid overmixing that can occur with an electric mixer. In the bakery, scones are mixed using a paddle attachment in the mixer.

The dry ingredients (flour, sugar, baking powder and salt) should be sieved into a mixing bowl and mixed together to ensure even dispersal.

The butter is added to the dry ingredient using a process called "Cutting in". This involves cutting the butter into small pieces into the dry ingredients until it resembles coarse crumb. The butter should be cold so when it is worked into the flour mixture it becomes small, flour-coated crumbs, not a smooth dough. In the home this is usually done with a pastry cutter or by using fingertips to rub the mixture to the right consistency. This process results in the fat being divided into small particles. The surface area of the fat is increased and thus more flour can make contact with it. The end result is that there are layers of flour untouched by the fat alternating with layers of fat particles embedded in flour. In the flour layers gluten is developed and in the fat layers the fat melts on baking leaving spaces between sheets of dough. This should result in the scone having a delicate and flaky texture.

Dried or fresh fruit and flavourings should then be added and evenly distributed.

Once the dry ingredients are combined a 'well' can be made in the centre for addition of the liquid ingredients. The dry and wet ingredients are mixed together with a fork or by paddle in the bakery. The key to either mixing method is not to over-mix the scones as this causes too much gluten to be formed in the dough which will result in tough and dry scones on baking. The ideal dough is soft and sticky with a ratio of one part liquid to three parts wheat flour

Once mixed, the dough should be transferred to a lightly floured surface and lightly kneaded and flattened out before being cut into rounds, triangles or the desired shape. They can then be placed on a lined baking sheet and brushed with an egg wash, which assists with appearance, especially browning.

Scone dough should ideally be baked after forming. Prolonged storage of the dough causes loss of carbon dioxide due to a baking powder reaction; the rate of gas loss is dependent on the components used in the baking powder and temperature of the dough. This will ultimately affect the volume and texture of the scones.

Scones need to be baked in a moderate to hot oven (200–230°C) so the dough sets quickly producing a light scone with a light to golden brown floury top and bottom with white sides. The texture of the interior should be light and soft, and white in colour.

Scones that are placed to close together on a baking tray so that they are almost touching will have soft sides and their crusts will be less crispy. By placing them further apart the scones will be crusty all over. The scones are baked when they are browned and when a knife inserted into centre of the scone comes out clean.

Cooling methods for scones can produce different texture characteristics in the final product. Uncovered scones will be crusty while those covered and wrapped will have a softer crust.

TROUBLE SHOOTING

| Process | Probable cause |
|----------------------------|---|
| Flat spread out appearance | Dough too soft. Oven too hot. |
| Dark colour | Oven too hot. Excess sugar added. |
| Heavy, lacking aeration | Flour too weak. Not enough raising agent. Dough too tight. Oven too cold. |
| Tough and lack shortness | Flour too strong. Not enough fat. Not enough baking powder. |
| Yellow spots | Baking powder not dissolved or neutralised (can be prevented by ensuring proper kneading of dough and leaving dough to stand for 10 minutes). |

REFERENCES

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