

Tips for Making Master Mixes & Mixes in a Jar

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Lowering the fat, sugar, salt, and calories in foods is often recommended as part of a healthy eating pattern. So is raising the amount of fiber. Also, some people need to avoid certain additives and food allergens. All this is possible when you cook or bake from a mix that has been modified for these factors. Here are some tips for when making master mixes.

1. Homemade mixes help you follow these MyPlate recommendations:
 - Enjoy your food, but eat less
 - Make at least half your grains whole grains
 - Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals — and choose the foods with lower numbers



2. Mixes can save you energy, time, and money. Plus, they make great gifts!

3. An easy and inexpensive way to decorate jars for gifts is to cover them with fabric. It takes about $\frac{1}{4}$ yard (9 inches). You can make about 4 jar coverings from that amount. Cut a fabric circle so it hangs down about two inches from the jar top. Check your kitchen for a lid or pie plate that you can use as a template for your circle or just secure a square of fabric on top of your jar and cut away the excess. The fabric circle may be placed under the lid band or over the band and held in place with a rubber band, covered by a ribbon.



4. Tips for Success: Making the Mixes

- Use a liquid measuring cup for measuring fluids, such as water, oil, and milk. Place the cup on a flat surface and fill to the desired line. Unless your measuring cup is designed to be viewed from the top, such as the cup on the right in the picture, view it from the side at eye level. Water will curve downward – view the bottom of the curve for measuring water. A dry measuring cup is used for larger amounts of dry ingredients, such as sugar and flour.



- It is important to avoid packing ingredients, except for brown sugar, when measuring. To avoid measuring too much flour, stir the flour lightly before measuring. Then spoon it into a dry measuring cup. Level the flour with a straight edge, such as a knife or spatula.
- It's generally recommended that you replace no more than half the all-purpose white flour with whole wheat flour. Too much whole wheat flour in a recipe calling for all-purpose flour might result in a reduced volume and a heavier product.
- Measuring spoons are used for measuring small amounts of ingredients, such as spices and powders. Fill the measuring spoon and level off with a straight edge. Some containers for dry ingredients, such as baking powder, may have a built-in edge for leveling. For liquids, fill the spoon to the edges with the liquid.
- Check expiration / other dates. You don't want ingredients such as baking powder or baking soda in a mix to expire before the mix is used.
- There is no standard procedure to substitute oil for a solid shortening in baked products. While oil is 100% fat – butter, margarine, and other solid shortenings are lower in fat on a volume for volume basis.
 - Solid shortening helps incorporate air into the batter when it is whipped with other ingredients such as sugar and eggs. This procedure is often referred to in a recipe as "creaming." If you try to cream ingredients with oil, your baked product is likely to be more compact and oily in texture.
 - Your most successful substitution occurs if your recipe calls for MELTED butter, in which case you can usually substitute an equal amount of oil.
 - Your best bet is to check with the companies that make oil – most have toll-free numbers or addresses that you can contact for more information and recipes. Also, check your cookbooks, the library, and the Internet for recipes that use oil.
 - Substituting a "lighter-type" margarine or butter that is reduced in calories may make certain foods, such as cookies, flat and thin. They are higher in liquid content and can affect texture and flavor.
 - NOTE: The only difference between salted and unsalted butter is that one has salt added to it – it can give recipes a more delicate flavor when you are baking recipes where butter is one of the main ingredients, such as butter cookies and pound cakes.
- One possible modification instead of adding bouillon granules (which can be fairly high in sodium) to a mix is: Check the label on the bouillon container for how many teaspoons of bouillon are needed to reconstitute a cup of liquid. Then, when possible, leave out the



bouillon granules and substitute equal cups of low sodium broth for equal cups of water in a recipe per each teaspoon of granules. For example:

- a. If directions say: 1 tsp. bouillon + 6 cups water = 6 cups bouillon
- b. And the **master mix** says: Add 6 teaspoons (2 tablespoons) bouillon granules
- c. And the **recipe says**: Add 12 cups (3 quarts) water
- d. Leave out the bouillon and substitute 6 cups of low sodium broth for 6 and 6 cups of water.

5. Tips for Success: Cooking and Baking from Mixes

- Make quick work of measuring out muffins and small cookies with scoops
- Lower oven temperature 25°F for glass cookware
- Dark pans brown and cook faster than shiny pans
- Check for doneness a few minutes before baking time is up



6. Beans may cause problems with gas for some people. Following are some tips to help prevent this.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) make the following recommendations for cooking with dried beans:
 - There are two steps to cooking beans: soaking and cooking. Soaking beans allows the dried beans to absorb water, which begins to dissolve the starches that cause intestinal discomfort. While beans are soaking they are also double to tripling in their size. Cooking the beans makes them edible and digestible.
 - *Note: Lentils, split peas and black-eyed peas do not need to be soaked. Pick through the beans, discarding any discolored or shriveled beans or any foreign matter. Rinse well.*
 - The three most common ways to soak beans as described by CDC “depending on how far in advance you plan and how much time you have” are:
 - ❖ **Traditional Slow Soak:** In a stockpot, cover 1 pound dried beans with 10 cups water. Cover and refrigerate 6-8 hours or overnight. Drain and rinse the beans.
 - ❖ **Hot Soak:** In a stockpot, bring 10 cups water to a boil. Add 1 pound dried beans and return to a boil. Remove from the heat; cover tightly and set aside at room temperature 2-3 hours. Drain and rinse the beans.
 - ❖ **Quick Soak:** In a stockpot, bring 10 cups water to a boil. Add 1 pound dried beans and return to a boil; let boil 2-3 minutes. Cover and set aside at room temperature 1 hour. Drain and rinse the beans.



- Some more bean pointers include:
 - Do not add salt or acidic ingredients, like vinegar, tomatoes or juice; this will slow the cooking process. Instead, add these ingredients when the beans are just tender.
 - Cooking times vary with the types of beans used but also may vary with their age.
 - Beans are done when they can be easily mashed between two fingers or with a fork. Always test a few beans in case they have not cooked evenly.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Fruit & Vegetable of the Month, retrieved October 24, 2011 at <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/beans.html>

7. Tips for Success: Handling Leftovers

- Avoid letting soup set at room temperature for more than TWO hours. For best safety and quality, plan to eat refrigerated soup within 3 to 4 days or freeze it. Don't put a large pot of hot soup directly into your refrigerator. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, it would take an 8-inch stock pot of steaming chicken soup 24 HOURS to cool to a safe temperature in your refrigerator. To be safe:
 - To speed cooling, transfer soup to shallow containers, making sure soup is no more than TWO inches deep. Refrigerate promptly. You can place loosely covered foods in the refrigerator while still warm; cover when food is completely cooled.
 - When serving soup a second time, reheat it until it's steaming hot throughout, at least 165 F.
- Use "freezer" bags, not "storage" bags for storing food in the freezer. Freezer bags are thicker than storage bags and will keep the food fresh longer.



Cardboard cartons for cottage and cream cheese, ice cream and milk are not sufficiently moisture vapor resistant to be suitable for long term freezer storage, unless they are lined with a freezer bag or wrap.

Flexible freezer bags and moisture-vapor resistant wrapping materials such as plastic freezer wrap, freezer paper and heavy-weight aluminum foil are suitable for dry packed products with little or no liquid. Bags and wraps work well for foods with irregular shapes. Bags can also be used for liquid packs. Label with the type of food, amount and date it was frozen.