

Nothing is better than homemade baked goods during the holidays. Everyone loves how the house smells, and they cannot wait until the big day to bite into the delectable goodies. But many times, Christmas baking can also be overwhelming, especially for the cook.

It's difficult to find time to bake at any time, but it can be even harder during the holidays with all the added activities associated with this time of the year. However, if you follow this guide, you'll be able to share wonderful times and delightful treats with your family and friends, and maybe even donate some of the goods too.



How to Pick the Perfect Recipes for Your Holiday Baking

One way to save time, money and effort is to start out by picking the right recipes for your holiday baking. You want to ensure that you make something for everyone, so that everyone has fond memories of the wonderful food, the smells, and the joy. But you also want to make sure that you choose recipes that make it easier to get the baking done. Picking recipes with these things in mind will make the holiday baking so much more enjoyable.

- Make Items That Are Freezable – If you can make it ahead and freeze it and still get a good result, consider the recipe a winner. It doesn't matter if you can freeze the entire finished product, or just the dough; freezing will help tremendously with ensuring that you have enough time to make the holiday baked items your family enjoys.
- Make Baked Goods with Similar Ingredients – Most baked goods do have very similar ingredients, just in different amounts, mixed in different ways. You know you're going to need sugar, butter, flour and then a variety of different spices and additions to make each recipe complete.

- Revisit Baking Memories from the Past – Gingerbread, sugar cookies, bread pudding and fudge might come to mind. If you have a childhood favorite, don't skip it. It's always great to share those things with your children. It is part of the wonderful traditions that make up the holidays.

- Ask Your Family and Friends What They Want – Everyone has something that makes the holiday for them. For some it's pumpkin pie, for others it's their grandma's apple pie. Whatever it is that is special to them, try to accommodate them if they're coming to your house at any point through the holidays.



- Consider Any Allergies – If you have family and friends with allergies, be sure to find out what is seriously an issue for them. For example, if someone is seriously allergic to nuts and they are coming to your house for a holiday dinner, you probably want to ensure that absolutely no nuts are anywhere to be found.

- Consider Food Preferences – Do you have someone who has a dietary preference who is going to be around for the holidays? If you do, try to make at least one baked item they can enjoy. For example, if you have someone who is on Weight Watchers, you can go to their website and find recipes that fit their diet. Perhaps your aunt is a vegan; find some recipes online that are vegan. Taking the extra time to include them won't be that difficult and you might find that everyone can enjoy that item, not just the one with the dietary need.

- Make Items That Consider Your Limitations – We all have issues that prevent us from being the perfect "Betty Crocker," but don't let that stop you. If you only have so much time, or space, no one is ever really going to mind that your sugar cookies were store bought from the refrigerator section, or that you made bread from a box. If the flavors are there and you get to experience the joy of baking with your family, they'll love it.

Don't worry; you can get it all done if you're prepared, organized, and create a holiday baking schedule. Creating your schedule will depend on how much time you have left before the holidays and which holidays; you'll be responsible for in your home. You can do a lot of baking in one day, freeze, and thaw later. Or you can do some baking each night until you've filled your freezer. Alternatively, you can do it all day before. It's up to you and depends greatly on the time and space you have available.

How to Organize Your Holiday Baking Shopping List to Make Shopping Faster

One of the best ways to save time with holiday baking is to organize your shopping list. Sometimes it can be really confusing to figure out how to do this, but of course the best way is to organize it in the order you will go through the grocery store. The problem is that stores are always mixing up things on different aisles. So, that might not always work.

The next best thing is to organize your shopping list by types of food that you will be purchasing; putting the cold foods last so that they spend less time in your shopping cart before checking out is a good thing too. So, try to shop in the order that best fits this purpose. The problem here is that many stores have produce on one end and frozen on another, so you may have to adjust how you go through the lines.



Keep a Running List

Even though you're planning a special shopping trip for your holiday baking, it's a good idea to always keep a running shopping list on your fridge. Use a magnetic clipboard to hold paper and pen, and each time you run out of an item that you know you'll need again, write it on the list. This makes planning for shopping day a lot easier.

This is especially important for commodity items like milk, flour and eggs as well as things you purchase less often like vanilla and spices. These are things you are likely to forget or think you have, or you have something and buy more "just in case" when it's not needed. Spices, for example, have a short shelf life so you really don't want to purchase them if you don't need them.

Read Your Recipes Closely

It's really important to go over your recipes while making your grocery list. Read them over so you can add together the amounts of the items you'll need. For example, if you are making bread, cookies, and pies, you're going to need more of a number of items than you would typically buy. It's important to add these items up to ensure you get the right amount.

Some people use a spreadsheet that will add the amounts up for them. Others use shopping list programs like the [one Walmart has available](#) or an app like ones available on Google Play or the App Store on iTunes. Just do a search and you'll be surprised what you come up with.

Know What You Have

Your running list should help, but after you have written down what you need for your recipes, go shopping in your cupboard first, marking off anything that you don't need. You don't want to skip this step because once again, you want to make sure you really do have enough cinnamon,