



Tips to avoiding the most common mishaps in Gluten-Free and Allergy-Free Baking:

By following some, or all, of these methods below, you, too, can become an amazing Allergy-Free Chef! Each of these tips are fairly pertinent to gluten-free and allergy-free baking, but are also helpful when not using alternative ingredients in your recipes.

****Make sure ALL of your ingredients are at room temperature, ESPECIALLY your eggs and your flours!** I used to be the queen of using eggs straight out of the refrigerator. Keeping them on the counter for about 30-45 minutes prior to using will do the trick, or, if short on time, stick them in a bowl of warm water for 15 minutes and you are good to go.

****Make sure that your baking powder and baking soda are fresh.** Discard them if they are expired, as this will affect rise in your baked goods. To tell if baking powder is still good: combine 1 teaspoon baking powder with 1/3 cup hot water. If it bubbles, it is still good. If not, replace it. To test if your baking soda is still good, add a 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda to 4 tablespoons of white vinegar. This should fizz up. If not discard it.

****Spoon Gluten Free flours into a measuring cup instead of using measuring cup to scoop out your flour from the container.** Important because if you scoop your flour out, you will cause the flours to compact, causing more dry goods by volume than necessary. This will dramatically affect the baked good because gluten free baking is truly a science, and disrupting the balance of dry to wet ingredients can greatly alter your results.

****Always sift your gluten free flours and all dry ingredients together (either with a sifter or with two spoons) to give your product a lighter, airier result.** This is especially important because often you will blend three or four different flours together to create a recipe – this blends them all thoroughly together.

****Here is a big one: Check your oven temperature with an oven thermometer to confirm that when you set your oven to a specific temperature, it really is working at that temperature.** A ten degree temperature difference in either direction can make a big difference. If you know, for instance that your oven always is actually 10 degrees hotter than what you set it at, then when a recipe calls for something to be cooked at 350 degrees, you can actually set it at 340 degrees to get accurate 350 degree results.

****When using glass pans, it is often wise to reduce the temperature by about 25 degrees so that the top can brown before the bottom burns.** The thought behind this is that with metal, the heat radiates through the pan and *then* warms the food. With glass, the radiated heat passes through the food more quickly. When making Gluten Free quick breads and rising yeast breads, a heavy metal pan will actually yield better results than a glass pan.

****Do not overfill your baking pans.** Only fill 2/3 of the way full. If a baked good reaches the top of a pan during cooking and still needs to rise more, it will collapse in the center. It needs something to grip on to the sides in order to keep going up in the middle!

****Do not over-mix your batters** - stir until ingredients are just incorporated and then gently fold in any nuts, dried fruits, or any other ad-ins. Gluten-Free and Allergy-Free baked goods do not rise as much as it is, so over-mixing can deflate your batter and ruin your rise.

****On the note of rising:** if you are using eggs (and are not Egg-Free), beating your eggs until they are foamy (or even separating the whites and the yolks and then beating the whites until slightly stiff and gently folding them in to the rest of the mixed batter) will often help to give more rise to a baked good.

****Bake all of your batters as soon as the ingredients are all assembled.** This will help prevent deflated baked goods.

****When measuring Coconut Oil, make sure that you measure it in it's liquid, not solid, state, unless a recipe states otherwise** (Volumes are different).

****When measuring Organic Palm Shortening, make sure that you measure it in it's solid, not liquid, state, unless a recipe states otherwise** (Volumes are different).

****A good trick when making cakes and bread loaves is to cut a piece of parchment paper to the exact size of the bottom of the pan that you are using (without letting it go up the sides).** And a tip from [Tia, of Glugle Gluten Free](#), is that when using parchment paper for the bottom of your cake pan, place the pan on top of the parchment paper and draw around the outside with a pencil or pen. Cut the circle, and it is the perfect size for the bottom of your pan without going up the sides. Grease the pan as usual, taking care not to grease the sides much. This will allow the batter to cling to the sides and rise in the center, and then helps you to remove it from the pan without sticking to the bottom.

****Remember that a steam crack down the center of a loaf of bread is actually a sign of a great cooked loaf** - the crack is caused by the steam during the baking process.

****Make sure that the center of your Gluten Free quick breads or rising yeast breads are at least 208 degrees (using an oven safe thermometer) to ensure they are fully cooked.** Under-cooked Gluten-Free baked goods will often sink in the middle.

****Make sure that the size of the pan that you are using corresponds to the size of the pan called for in your recipe.** For instance, in recipes calling for a large loaf pan, it typically means to use a 9 x 5 x 3 inch pan (usually will hold 8 cups of your batter). When calling for a medium loaf pan, it typically means to use a 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 inch pan (or about 6 cups of batter). A small loaf pan usually means to use a 8 x 4 x 2 1/2 pan (or about 4 cups of batter). Using the wrong size will affect the cook time dramatically. If you know you do not have the right size pan, adjust your baking times up or down to compensate and watch your goods carefully. This was another thing I was guilty of - I would just use whatever loaf pan was on hand and then wonder why it was dried out or still gooey in the center. Volume and pan size reference: [Joy Of Baking](#)

****Another tip that I learned from a chef, is that when breads are done cooking, turn the oven off and open the door (leaving the loaf in the oven) so that the bread can cool slowly.** Remove the loaf after five minutes. Taking the bread out of a hot oven and then placing it on a cold counter can make it sink too.

****And on the note of cooling loaves, Shirley, of *gfe-gluten free easily*, reminded me of two more useful tips:** only cool cakes in pan for about 10 minutes and then remove; otherwise, you might have a crumbled mess. Tube/Bundt cakes also cool great by sitting on the neck of a full wine bottle for those 10 minutes.

****And when it comes to prepared doughs, Jenn, of *Jenn's Cuisine*, pointed out another important tip:** always let GF dough rest for at least 45 minutes before handling. This is especially true if making something like pasta by hand...wrapping up dough in plastic wrap and letting it just hang out on the counter for a while (or in the fridge for a pie crust) seems to help a bit

****Remember that substituting ingredients is also about trial-and-error.** A replacement that may work in one recipe, may not work well in another. Keep notes on what works for each recipe. Some may give a close-to-perfect match when made with substitutions. Others may give a very different look and feel to what you predicted for the recipe. Figuring out how much of a role your allergen plays in the recipe is also a good idea.

****And Most Importantly: READ LABELS!!** An allergen can be hiding in the ingredient list of a product. And always remember that "Wheat Free" is NOT the same as "Gluten Free".