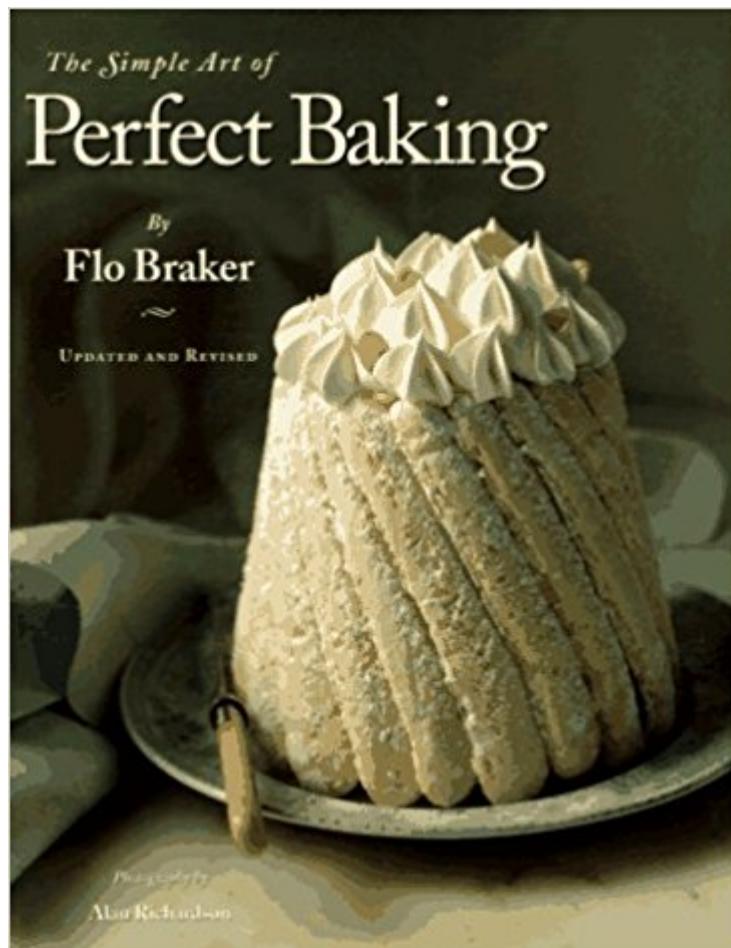


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# The Simple Art Of Perfect Baking



## **Synopsis**

In what has been called the "perfect book for imperfect bakers," Flo Braker takes the fear and unpredictability out of baking. She not only provides a fail-safe recipes for cakes, pies, tarts, and pastries - and their fillings, frostings, and glazes - but also clarifies the science of baking such memorable creations as Lemon Tart with Blueberries, Chocolate Rhapsody, strawberry Window Cake, and hundreds more.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"With Flo Braker by your side, your deserts will receive curtain calls." (The New York Times)"A must for bakers." (USA Today)

Flo Baker lives near San Francisco, California.

Flo Braker's 'The Simple Art of Perfect Baking' is being reissued after serving as a manual to millions of home bakers for almost 20 years as well as a model to emulate by important baking authors such as Gayle and Joe Ortiz of Gayle's Bakery and authors of 'The Village Baker's Wife'. It is important to note that while in English, 'baking' suggests pastry, cakes, and breads, this book is truly only about what the French call patisserie. It is even more accurately described as primarily a book about cake baking, with approximately a quarter of the book dedicated to pastry. Everything said about the book must be understood to be referring to only torts and tarts. On average, I think books on baking seem to reach a generally higher level of quality than comparable books on savory cooking. One reason is probably that you can't fake it in baking. A small misstep in measurement,

equipment, or procedure can lead to something entirely different from what you intended. Of course, Braker makes the humorous, but very sound suggestion to never throw away your mistakes. You never can tell when you may have happened onto the recipe for something very worthwhile to eat. Above all, don't tell your guests that their dessert is the result of a mistake. The baking enthusiast's book buying is also simplified by the presence of a few very highly respected names such as Maida Heatter, Nick Malgieri, Lindsey Shere, and Flo Braker. To this distinguished list, I must add Sherry Yard, author of the great 'The Secrets of Baking'. I do not have the pleasure of having read or reviewed books by Maida Heatter or Lindsey Shere, but I am quite familiar with cake and pastry books by Nick Malgieri, Gayle Ortiz, Sherry Yard, and several others. In this company, Flo Braker deserves all the acclamation she has received. Any foodie worth their salt knows that the big distinction between baking and savory cooking is measurement, but few probably know why this is true or are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring precision. Not the least of Braker's accomplishments is to teach you how to be precise, teach you how to avoid mistakes in measuring, and impress on you the importance of weighing instead of measuring by volume. The most valuable aspect of this book is its 'modular' approach to recipes. While there are hundreds of different cake recipes, all of these hundreds are presented as distinct variations on two basic types, butter cakes and foam cakes, with sponge cakes further divided into genoise cakes, sponge cakes, angel food cakes, chiffon cake, meringues, and dacquoise. To make this highly effective approach even more agreeable to the amateur, the author does not burden us with a single master recipe for, for example, genoise, followed by a dozen paragraph long variations whose expansion into a full recipe is left to the reader. Every single one of the twenty-three (23) genoise cake recipes are spelled out, including notes on why a brown sugar genoise has different ingredients and is made with a different method than a classic genoise. The 'baker's notes' at the end of each recipe are simply not to be overlooked. The modular approach extends beyond the cake baking to the final construction of the cake from layers, fillings, frostings, and decorations. A full third of the book is devoted to each of these subjects individually, in such a way that one can easily mix and match cake, filling, and frosting to create something customized entirely to your personal taste or that of your family or guests. This middle section also contains two important chapters devoted to working with chocolate and sugar. The section on chocolate cannot replace books dedicated to the subject and I think Sherry Yard's discussion of caramel is more illuminating, but these sections are invaluable in supporting the other topics in the book. The chapter on pastry covers all the usual bases: unsweetened short pastry, sweetened short pastry, puff pastry, and cream puff pastry. While this section and the book as a whole does not have a lot of pictures depicting methods, I am really

happy to see diagrams illustrating the *fraisage* technique for pressing butter into pastry dough. I have read many descriptions of the technique and few manage to make sense without an accompanying picture. The details for measuring continue in pastry making, as when the author stresses the importance of a 1/8 inch thickness for a rolled pie crust. The only technique I know which seems to get a less than thorough treatment is blind baking. The technique is used, but little explanation is given for why it is done and under what circumstances it is important to use it, and when it is not necessary. I will point out that the author's preference for fat in basic piecrusts is vegetable shortening. If, like me, you happen to be a butter person, I recommend you consult Sherry Yard's Master Recipe for 3-2-1 pie dough. It seems almost heretical to say this, but it is possible that this book and other teaching books such as those from Rose Levy Beranbaum may simply not be your cup of tea. If you are already a successful, accomplished baker, you may be happier with a book that simply gives lots of different recipes. I make this warning because people have occasionally objected to excellent books because the recipes were too involved or too talky. But, I think a baker who aspires to great pies and cakes should have at least one book like this and all the homey books on regional recipes you can find. Where else are you to find a great recipe for Shoofly pie! Highly recommended cornerstone volume to your pie and cake-baking library.

Great Product.

This is a wonderful book for experienced and inexperienced cake bakers alike! I learn something new from each recipe I try. I especially love her conceptual approach to baking, by explaining the whys and hows of why we would use a scale versus a measuring cup or why you may want to brush your cakes with a flavored syrup, she really opens your eyes to concepts that I've blown off in the past simply because no one had taken the time to explain why this works over that. It's just so insightful and such a good read that I find myself using this book like a reference book, so it's my new Cake Bible.

Want to learn to bake with perfection? This is the cookbook in my humble opinion. Filled with classic and unique recipes with expert instruction, I look to this cookbook everytime I start a project in my kitchen, especially Flo's famous Devil's Food Cake!

This book was exactly what I was looking for: a how-to guide that explains the baking process. Flo is very detailed, explaining the techniques in simple terms. The only thing that would make this book

better would be color photographs of the techniques she describes.

A great classic that covers all the basics for you plus some very fancy delights. A great gift!

A true baking classic & the book arrived in perfect condition, even better than I expected.

I actually bought it as a gift. I could not resist looking through it. I like to keep a very low sugar diet and gluten free; I was tempted!

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