

5.8: Water Hardness and pH

Effects on Baking

Most municipal supplies of water contain chlorine, which is used to ensure the purity of the water. Some cities add fluoride to their water supply to stop tooth decay. Neither chlorine nor fluoride is present in large enough quantities to affect dough in any way. In addition, most municipal water is treated to reduce excessive acidity, since this could be corrosive for the water lines. It is therefore unlikely that bakers using municipal water need to be concerned about extremely acidic water.

Soft water is another matter, as it can lead to sticky dough. An addition of yeast food, or a reduction in dough water, will help. Alkaline water tends to tighten the dough and retard fermentation, since enzymes work best in slightly acidic dough.

If there is a possibility of water problems, a sample should be forwarded to a laboratory for a complete analysis.

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