

2.10: Other Grains and Flours

Several other types of grains are commonly used in baking. In particular, corn and oats feature predominantly in certain types of baking (quick breads and cookies respectively, for instance) but increasingly rice flour is being used in baked goods, particularly for people with gluten sensitivities or intolerances. The trend to whole grains and the influence of different ethnic cultures has also meant the increase in the use of other grains and pulses for flours used in breads and baking in general.

Corn

Corn is one of the most widely used grains in the world, and not only for baking. Corn is used in breads and cereals, but also to produce sugars (such as dextrose and corn syrup), starch, plastics, adhesives, fuel (ethanol), and alcohol (bourbon and other whisky). It is produced from the maize plant (the preferred scientific and formal name of the plant that we call corn in North America). There are different varieties of corn, some of which are soft and sweet (corn you use for eating fresh or for cooking) and some of which are starchy and are generally dried to use for baking, animal feed, and popcorn.

Varieties Used in Baking

- Cornmeal has a sandy texture and is ground to fine, medium, and coarse consistencies. It has most of the husk and germ removed, and is used in recipes from the American South (e.g., cornbread) and can be used to add texture to other types of breads and pastry.
- Stone-ground cornmeal has a texture not unlike whole wheat flour, as it contains some of the husk and germ. Stone ground cornmeal has more nutrients, but it is also more perishable. In baking, it acts more like cake flour due to the lack of gluten.
- Corn flour in North America is very finely ground cornmeal that has had the husk and germ removed. It has a very soft powdery texture. In the U.K. and Australia, corn flour refers to cornstarch. Cornstarch is the starch extracted from the maize kernel. It is primarily used as a thickener in baking and other cooking. Cornstarch has a very fine powdery consistency, and can be dissolved easily in water. As a thickening agent, it requires heat to set, and will produce products with a shiny, clear consistency.
- Blue cornmeal has a light blue or violet colour and is produced from whole kernels of blue corn. It is most similar to stone-ground cornmeal and has a slightly sweet flavour.

Rice

Rice is another of the world's most widely used cereal crops and forms the staple for much of the world's diet. Because rice is not grown in Canada, it is not regulated by the Canadian Grain Commission.

Varieties Used in Baking

- Rice flour is prepared from finely ground rice that has had the husks removed. It has a fine, slightly sandy texture, and provides crispness while remaining tender due to its lack of gluten. For this reason, many gluten-free breads are based on rice flours or blends that contain rice flour.
- Short grain or pearl rice is also used in the pastry shop to produce rice pudding and other desserts.

Oats

Oats are widely used for animal feed and food production, as well as for making breads, cookies, and dessert toppings. Oats add texture to baked goods and desserts.

Varieties Used in Baking

- Bakers will most often encounter rolled oats, which are produced by pressing the de-husked whole kernels through rollers.
- Oat bran and oat flour are produced by grinding the oat kernels and separating out the bran and endosperm.
- Whole grain oat flour is produced by grinding the whole kernel but leaving the ground flour intact. Steel-cut oats are more commonly used in cooking and making breakfast cereals, and are the chopped oat kernels.

Other Grains and Pulses

A wide range of additional flours and grains that are used in ethnic cooking and baking are becoming more and more widely available in Canada. These may be produced from grains (such as kamut, spelt, and quinoa), pulses (such as lentils and chickpeas),

and other crops (such as buckwheat) that have a grain-like consistency when dried. Increasingly, with allergies and intolerances on the rise, these flours are being used in bakeshops as alternatives to wheat-based products for customers with special dietary needs.

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