

BAKING POWDER AND SODA

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Some of the recipes in this cookbook list baking powder as one of the ingredients. Dietitians recognize that baking powder--especially certain kinds of baking powder, or when products made with baking powder are used often or in considerable quantity--has certain deleterious effects on the body. Accordingly, those who desire the best quality foods, prepared in the most appetizing, nourishing, and healthful manner, will prefer either to make a minimal use of baking powder or to rely on other leavening agents. The chief advantages of baking powder are simplicity of use and fast leavening action.

Whereas yeast leavens gradually, by means of the byproducts of bacterial action, baking powder accomplishes a similar effect by chemical reaction in the presence of water. Baking powder is composed of (1) baking soda, a strong alkali or base; (2) an acid salt (tartarate, sodium aluminum sulfate, or calcium acid phosphate separately or in combination; represented by Royal, Calumet, and Rumford baking powders respectively); and (3) a carrier such as powdered egg albumen or cornstarch.

The acid in the presence of moisture neutralizes the soda and forms carbonic acid, which in turn breaks up and gives off water and the gas carbon dioxide. If the acid and base ingredients are carefully balanced or blended, undesirable results are reduced to a minimum. The strong alkali salts, however, irritate the digestive tissues; they are cathartic; they destroy vitamins. Most injurious of the residual salts is aluminum phosphate (from alum), and least injurious is the phosphate. For the reasons cited Royal Baking Powder is preferable to the others.

An ordinary loaf of bread made with baking powder contains half a dose of laxative salts. The occasional and limited use of products made with the least objectionable baking powders will have a minimal injurious effect on the body. Even though the effect from each use may be relatively mild, continuous use can be injurious in its cumulative effect. Furthermore, all baking powders destroy vitamins, which are necessary to metabolism and to protecting the body against disease.

Recipes listing baking powder as an ingredient are included in this cookbook with the above reservations, and with the suggestion that those who prefer the best and most healthful foods will wish to rely, primarily at least, on yeast or on a skillful use of eggs and milk. Under any circumstances, products with baking powder as an ingredient are best kept to a minimum. Hot breads, cakes, and pies leavened by these agents should never be eaten in large quantities.