

Delicious Memories: Historic Cooking Glossary

Alum: Chemical (sulphate of potassium aluminum) used to keep vegetables and fruits crisp in the canning process. It can be purchased in the spice section of grocery stores.

Baking Powder: A ready to use combination of an acid (tartaric acid) and an alkali (baking soda) that leavens doughs. It has been commercially available since 1850; before that cooks used baking soda (saleratus) and an acid ingredient like buttermilk. See also Saleratus.

Beard: To remove the hair-like filaments oysters use to attach themselves to rocks.

Blanch: To plunge food into boiling water very briefly, then into cold water, in order to remove the skins, firm the flesh and heighten the colour.

Choux Paste: A cooked egg paste used as a basis for fine cream pastries. *Pâte à choux* means cabbage paste, because cooked cream puffs look like little cabbages. See Choux Paste under Methods & Techniques.

Citron: A semi-tropical fruit that resembles a large yellow-green, lumpy lemon. This fruit is difficult to obtain but watermelon rind can be easily substituted.

Cracked Wheat: Cracked wheat is produced by cracking the hard wheat kernels into fragments approximately 1/4 of the whole kernel. it has all the nutritional values of the whole kernel. See Whole Wheat Kernel and Whole Wheat Meal for comparison.

Dredge: To lightly coat the fruit in flour so that fruit can be evenly distributed within the batter.

Fruit Sugar: A natural by-product of fruits and honey, it is also called fructose.

Hops: A vining plant that produces cone-like flowers. Hops flowers can be purchased through the Internet, or as some "Make Your Own Beer" supply stores. Hops flowers should be used, not hop pellets.

Pearl Ash: A substance similar to baking powder and made from potash. Potash or potassium carbonate is obtained by evaporating the lye of wood ashes.

Pip: the seeds of fleshy fruits or berries.

Rosewater: A distillation of rose petals. Rosewater is a flavouring that was popular in cakes and cookies. In the 1850's vanilla became more popular and by the Edwardian Era rosewater and orange blossom flower water were used only in the dishes of some cultures. For example, Middle Eastern cooking still uses both flavours within sweet and savory dishes.

Saleratus: A product used as a leavener in baked goods. The modern equivalent is baking soda.

Shrub: A drink made with vinegar and the juice of any fruit, though usually a berry. This drink used to be made with liquor but now is usually made without it.

Sweetbreads: The thymus gland or pancreas of an animal used for food.

Temper: The action of adding a small amount of a hot liquid to a cold egg liquid mixture. When two liquids are being combined and they are of two different temperatures a small amount of the hot liquid should be added to the cold. They will then be closer in temperature when added together. Therefore if there are eggs in the cold mixture the eggs will not be cooked when combined with the hot, but brought up to temperature slowly.

Vol-au-Vent: a small puff pastry container, also called a patty shell, used to hold both sweet and savory mixtures.

Whole Wheat Kernel (Berry): The wheat berries are whole unprocessed kernels, whereas cracked wheat is the whole berry broken into fragments. See Cracked Wheat and Whole Wheat Meal for comparison.

Whole Wheat Meal: A meal is the edible portion of a grain ground to a coarse powder. Whole Wheat Meal is the whole wheat berry ground to a meal stage. It is finer than bulgur wheat. Whole wheat berry and cracked wheat can be purchased in health food and bulk food stores. Cracked wheat can be processed in a food processor to a "meal" consistency. See Cracked Wheat and Whole Wheat Kernel for comparison.

Yeast: A single cell, microscopic organism which, as it grows, produces alcohol and carbon dioxide through a process known as fermentation. It is this action of fermentation that leavens doughs.

- **Active Dry Yeast (Fleischmann's):** Baker's yeast reduced to dehydrated granules, available in strips of 3 foil packages of 8 g each. One package equals 1 tablespoon. Also available in small tins.
- **Yeast Starter:** A mixture of flour, water, sugar, and natural airborne yeast spores used as a leavener in bread and cake making before baking powders and yeasts were commercially available. A starter can be refrigerated indefinitely, as long as it is replenished with equal amounts of flour and water every 2 weeks. For example, if you remove 1 cup of starter it should be replenished with 1 cup of flour and 1 cup of water. Stir well to blend. Let it sit out for 4 or 5 hours to become active then return to the refrigerator. If you do not use your starter before the end of one week, discard 1 cup of starter and replenish it as instructed above. Do not let the starter get too low, or it will be difficult to replenish; about 1 cup of starter is needed. Before either using or replenishing a starter it should be brought to room temperature.