

inch apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Brush dough tops with melted butter. (May be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 2 hours.) Bake until biscuit tops are light brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Serve immediately.



Flaky Biscuits

MAKES 16 BISCUITS

After stirring in the milk, this dough should feel very soft and moist, but you should be able to hold it briefly between lightly floured hands without its sticking. If it turns out wet and sticky, return it to the bowl and sprinkle it with 2 to 4 tablespoons additional flour (of any kind) on all sides, gently patting in the flour with your palm. Let the dough rest another half-minute before removing it to your work surface. It is best to discard the dough that is left over from the second cutting, as biscuits made with thrice-recycled dough tend to be tough and flat. If you don't want to use a biscuit cutter, form the dough into a neat eight-inch square and cut it into little squares or triangles with a knife. This eliminates all scraps and thus all the problems of re-rolling. No matter how they are cut, these biscuits are best served at once, though leftovers may be wrapped and refrigerated for a day, then reheated for a few minutes in a 350-degree oven.

- 2 cups high-protein all-purpose flour, such as King Arthur, or 1 cup low-protein unbleached all-purpose flour, such as Pillsbury, and 1 cup bread flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch cubes, plus 2 tablespoons melted for brushing tops
- 3 tablespoons vegetable shortening or lard, chilled
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold milk

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees.

2. Mix flour, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl or the workbowl of a food processor fitted with steel blade. Add butter; with your fingertips, a pastry blender, 2 knives, or steel blade of a food processor, mix, cut, or process butter and shortening into dry ingredients, until the mixture resembles dry oatmeal.

(Transfer food processor mixture to a large bowl.)

3. Stir in milk with a rubber spatula or fork until dry ingredients are just moistened. Let dough rest for 1 minute, then transfer it to a well-floured work surface.

4. Roll dough into rough 6 x 10-inch rectangle. With long edge of dough facing you, fold in both short ends of dough so that they meet in center; then fold dough in half by width, forming a package of dough four layers thick. Once again, roll the dough into a 6 x 10-inch rectangle, about ½ inch thick.

5. Using a lightly greased and floured 2-inch cutter, stamp, with one decisive punch per round, 4 rows of 3 dough rounds, cutting them close together to generate as few scraps as possible. Dip cutter into flour before each new cut. Push the scraps of dough together so that their edges join; firmly pinch the edges with fingertips to make a partial seal. Pat the dough into small rectangle, fold it as before, and re-roll until ½ inch thick. Cut out 3 or 4 more biscuits.

6. Place dough rounds 1½ inches apart on an ungreased baking sheet; brush dough tops with melted butter. (May be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated up to 3 hours.)

7. Bake until biscuits are lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Serve immediately.

➤ VARIATIONS

Cheddar Biscuits

Decrease butter to 5 tablespoons in Fluffy Biscuits or to 3 in Flaky Biscuits. After the fat has been cut or processed into the flour, add 1 cup shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese (4 ounces); toss lightly, then stir in liquid.

Herb Biscuits

Split these and use them as a base for rich scrambled eggs or chicken stews, or serve them as biscuits plain and simple.

Follow recipe for Fluffy Biscuits, adding 3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves or 2 tablespoons parsley and 1 tablespoon of either minced fresh tarragon or dill leaves after the fat has been cut or processed into the flour.