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Release Number: 11-10
Date: January 21, 2010
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It's bread-baking season

*By Kay Blakley,
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FORT LEE, Va. – If you're a home baker, you understand fully what I'm referring to when I say, "It's bread-baking season." Of course, you can bake bread any time of year, but the cooler months just seem to beckon you to the warmth of your kitchen.

Plenty of people think they have no time for baking. "I'm just too busy," they claim, "and if I do have time, I don't want to spend it tied to a long-term kitchen project." That's a pity, since almost any baker will tell you a day of baking is effective therapy for whatever happens to ail you. Maybe the delicious reward when the product is finished has something to do with it.

If you're a beginning baker, here are a few tips to ensure success:

- Measure accurately, using dry measuring cups for dry ingredients and a liquid measuring cup for liquids.
- Most flours don't need to be sifted, even though some older recipes might call for it. Always measure flour by fluffing it with a spoon or fork in the storage container, then lightly spoon the flour into the dry measuring cup. Slightly overfill the cup, then gently level off with the straight side of a knife. Use the same leveling-off technique for dry ingredients measured by the measuring spoon.
- Use a liquid measuring cup for liquid ingredients. Set the cup on the counter, measure in the liquid, then double check for accuracy by lowering yourself to view the measurement mark at eye level.

- Pay close attention to “use-by” dates on packaged dry yeast. If past its date or even close to it, it’s a good idea to replace it with fresher yeast. A recipe that failed to rise properly is a big disappointment.
- When a recipe calls for adding liquid at a certain temperature, always verify that temperature with a thermometer before adding to other ingredients. A liquid that’s too hot can kill the yeast and ruin the dough.
- When a recipe calls for warmed buttermilk or other dairy products, these can be heated in the microwave. But, heat slowly, stir often, and check the temperature with a thermometer. Dairy products will separate and curdle at high temperatures.

Come to Kay’s Kitchen at <http://www.commissaries.com> and give one of our featured recipes a try. All the necessary ingredients are ready and waiting for you at your local commissary. The recipes range from super easy to very involved, but none are difficult. Be forewarned, though, once you’ve experienced the joy of bread baking, you run the risk of being hooked for life!

- DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*