
GINETTE MATHIOT

THE ART
OF
FRENCH
BAKING

BRIOCHES
ÉCLAIRS
SOUFFLÉS
CHOUX BUNS
MADELEINES
GÂTEAUX
MERINGUES
MACARONS

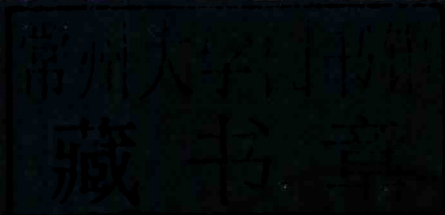
**The definitive guide
to home baking
by France's favourite
cookbook author**

**Over 350 simple and
authentic recipes**

PHAIDON

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OF
FRENCH
BAKING



Ginette Mathiot

Ginette Mathiot (1907–1998), legendary French food writer and the foremost authority on home cooking in France, taught three generations of French families how to cook. Author of more than 30 best-selling cookbooks covering every aspect of French cuisine, she brought together recipes for classic French dishes in her definitive works, including *Je sais cuisiner* and *Je sais faire la pâtisserie*.

Clotilde Dusoulier

Parisian Clotilde Dusoulier is a food writer and an expert on French home cooking, who specializes in adapting traditional French dishes for modern readers. She is the author of two cookbooks and her vast knowledge of French food has led many fans to her 'Chocolate & Zucchini' website. She has adapted this English edition in consultation with a team of international cookery experts. By preserving the book's authenticity, they reveal to us all the secrets of simple, delicious French desserts.

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⁷
A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

⁸
INTRODUCTION TO BAKING

²⁸
BASIC RECIPES

⁵⁰
SMALL CAKES

⁸⁸
GÂTEAUX

¹⁴⁴
TARTS AND PASTRIES

¹⁹⁸
BISCUITS

²⁴⁴
MILK AND EGG PUDDINGS

³¹⁴
DESSERTS FROM CELEBRATED CHEFS

³²⁸
GLOSSARY

³³⁰
INDEX

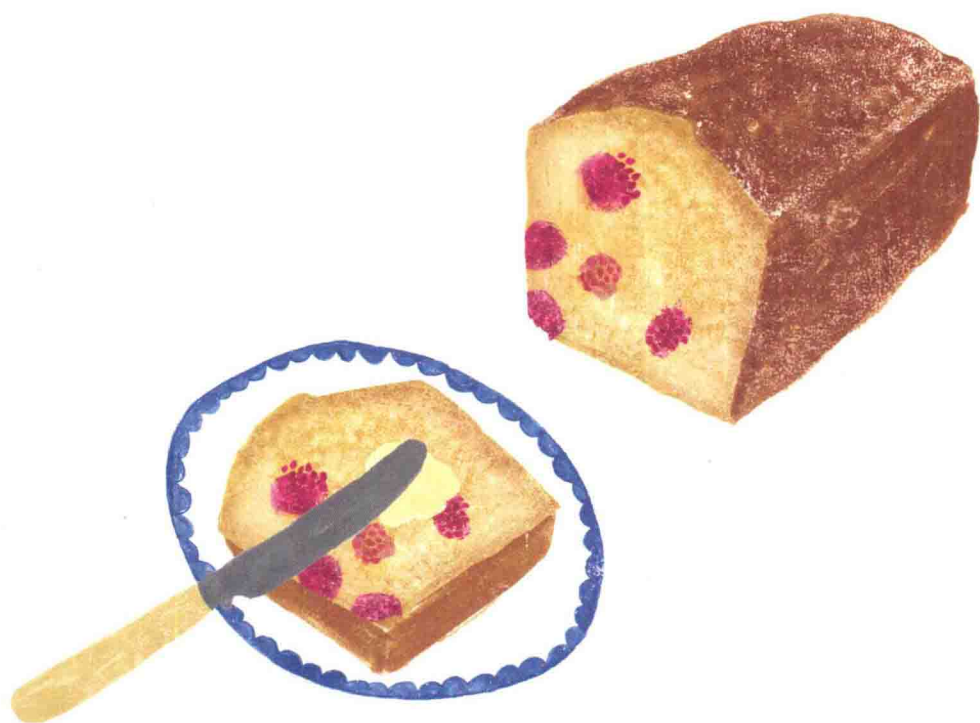
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7
A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

8
INTRODUCTION TO BAKING

28
BASIC RECIPES

50
SMALL CAKES

88
GÂTEAUX

144
TARTS AND PASTRIES

198
BISCUITS

244
MILK AND EGG PUDDINGS

314
DESSERTS FROM CELEBRATED CHEFS

328
GLOSSARY

330
INDEX

FOREWORD

Growing up in a French family, my earliest and fondest kitchen memories involve pastries.

My mother is an excellent cook and an equally gifted baker. Every weekend was an opportunity to exercise her talents, and to satisfy our hunger for simple baked goods. She would serve them for dessert at the end of our meals – perhaps a caramelized *crème renversée* (Crème Caramel, p. 252), a lustrous *tarte aux fraises* (Strawberry Tart, p. 184), or a feather-light *île flottante* (Floating Island, p. 290) – or in the afternoon, with tea – this time a fragrant *gâteau d'orange* (Orange Cake, p. 92), a buttery *quatre-quart* (Pound Cake, p. 105), or an assortment of crisp *sablés* (p. 228).

She was always keen to get the children involved, and my sister and I spent many a joyful hour elbow-deep in flour, breaking eggs, cutting out flower-shaped biscuits, or glazing golden cakes.

As a result of this early exposure, I am not daunted by French baking as some would-be bakers might be, but I do understand this reaction: certainly, anyone looking through the windows of a Parisian bakery and admiring the display of too-beautiful-to-eat pastries is bound to feel in awe.

Ever since the great French chef Antonin Carême set out to modernize pastry in the wake of the French Revolution, inventing the famous towering construction of caramelized choux buns called *croquembouche* and documenting his work in a series of fascinating books, France has fostered generations of extraordinary artisans who have elevated their craft to an art form.

But the truth is, even the most complex French pastry is but a sum of basic techniques, building blocks that can be learnt, mastered in time, and then used to replicate the greatest classics, or come up with your own creations.

This is what Ginette Mathiot's baking bible is all about: teaching you the elemental components of French baking, and putting them into practice to produce delectable desserts that will make you proud and delight your guests.

Ginette Mathiot was a twenty-five-year-old home economics teacher when she published her first book in 1932, *Je Sais Cuisiner*, a monumental compendium of French recipes that was first published in English by Phaidon in 2009, under the title *I Know How To Cook*. She had put it together over the course of several years, enlisting her students to help with the testing.

The result was so wide in scope and so easy to use, that it soon became a best-selling title, and millions of copies have since then found their place in French kitchens.

The success of this volume led Mathiot to write a second one devoted entirely to sweets and desserts, largely expanding the selection she had included in her first book. A few years later, in 1938, she published *Je Sais Faire La Pâtisserie* (*I Know How to Make Pastries*). In it she effectively covers all the basics that make up the French *pâtisserie* repertoire, from the simplest confections to the most sophisticated, from biscuits and cakes to tarts and custards, so that no baking need should be left unanswered. *The Art of French Baking* draws recipes from both of these classic books.

Seventy years and several editions later, it remains a much-loved book that readers have used as a learning tool – to familiarize themselves with the different techniques, gain experience and develop their confidence – or as a reference book for looking up the recipe for brioche or chocolate soufflé as the occasion arises.

Ginette Mathiot's writing voice is benevolent and practical, and she believes that less is more: the original versions of her recipes are generally quite short, allowing the baker to get a sense of the process at a glance, without losing him in lengthy explanations.

In this English edition, however, our team of editors has striven to flesh out these recipes, adding detail where we felt more was needed, and we have taken the liberty of amending them from time to time, when modern practice demanded an update. For instance, cakes rise best when the baking powder is combined with the flour beforehand, for optimal dispersion in the batter, but the original French recipes did not specify that.

Our goal was always to bring to an English-speaking audience the helpful and comprehensive baking book that the French have known and used for several generations, and to make these wonderful desserts accessible, showing you how simple it can be to create your own *gâteaux*, *sablés* and *soufflés*.

Whether you're a budding baker or an accomplished one, we hope you will find plenty of recipes to tempt your palate and hone your skills, and that this book soon becomes a trusted companion on your kitchen shelf.

Clotilde Dusoulier

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

“Anyone who enjoys cooking also wants to bake. However, all too often the books you consult are disappointing because the recipes in them are complicated and expensive to make. *Je Sais Faire La Pâtisserie*, on the other hand, is an extremely user-friendly book.

Contrary to a long-held belief, baked goods and desserts should not be regarded as a luxury at home. Composed of flour, sugar, fat and eggs, they are made with a few straightforward ingredients. It goes without saying that when you make a dessert or a cake yourself, instead of buying something ready-made and expensive, you are adding to the nutritional value of the meal and reducing its cost, and, of course, you know exactly what has gone into it.

Practical considerations apart, there is such

satisfaction to be gained from making and decorating a dessert or even inventing a sweet confection of your own. Encouraged by the success of *Je Sais Cuisiner* (*I Know How to Cook*), I wanted to respond to the many readers who requested pâtisserie and dessert recipes. This is not a recipe collection for professionals, but rather a cookbook intended for everyone who wants to make classic, tasty desserts using good-quality ingredients and a minimum of equipment. All instructions are set out in simple terms. Quantities and cooking times are stated precisely.

First and foremost, the aim of this book is to help home cooks, to satisfy the most dedicated cake enthusiast and to tempt the beginner.”

Ginette Mathiot, *Je Sais Faire la Pâtisserie*, 1991





Pâtisserie

BOULANGERIE

Café de Paris

INTRODUCTION

TO

BAKING

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

Dough scraper

A stiff, flexible scraper, also known as a 'corne' in France, that is used for scraping every last trace of mixture out of bowls. The straight side fits into your palm, the curved side scrapes the bowl clean. You can also use a rubber spatula.

Food processors

A small appliance which enables you to carry out many of the tasks set out in a recipe quickly and without having to use your hands. Although not strictly a requirement for home baking, food processors are excellent for chopping and liquidizing. The larger size food processors are the most useful. These often come with a small interior bowl as well as a larger bowl. The small bowl can be used for grinding and chopping small quantities of nuts and herbs. Choose a model with the bowl sitting over the top of the motor as this design is the most durable. Different models are available in several sizes.

Kitchen scales

All the recipes in this book are very precise. The quantities are given in grams with an imperial conversion. A recipe may well not work if the proportions have not been strictly adhered to. Accurate scales are essential. Follow one set of measurements only.

Mixers

Stand mixers are one of the most helpful pieces of kitchen equipment for home baking. These mixers come with attachments for mixing, whisking and kneading. Additional bowls can be purchased if the volume of baking grows beyond a cake or loaf of bread. Choose the best model you can afford.

Mixing bowls

Stainless steel, earthenware or copper bowls in various shapes and sizes are needed for preparing various mixtures, beating eggs and so on. A selection of different sizes from small to large in a set of at least 3 is recommended. Plastic bowls are not recommended because they are difficult to clean thoroughly. Heatproof bowls should be used for melting chocolate.

Moulds and tins

Start with a few basic moulds and tins and add to your collection as needed. Many of the moulds and tins you

can buy nowadays are non-stick, which makes unmoulding easier.

Non-stick pans do not need to be greased, although lining the base is recommended for cakes. Choose heavy, sturdy tins. These are the most useful:

Cake tins. 20 cm (8 inches), to take about 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) of cake mixture; deep springform cake tins, 20 cm (8 inches) and 25 cm (10 inches).

Tart tins with removable base. 15 cm (6 inches) for 2 servings; 25 cm (10 inches) for 6 servings; 30 cm (12 inches) for 8 servings.

Cupcake trays and madeleine tins.

Baking sheet or tray. A rectangular or round metal dish or tray, with a raised edge for baking biscuits, tarts and free-form loaves. Select the largest size that fits in your oven and choose a heavy-duty make for durability.

Rectangular loaf tins. 20 x 10 cm (8 x 4 inches), to take about 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) of cake mixture or dough; 25 x 12 ½ cm (9 x 5 inches) to take 675 g (1 ½ lb) of cake mixture and dough:

Savarin moulds and baba moulds. 25 cm (10 inches) average size; 5 cm (2 inches) for individual moulds.

Small cake and tart tins in a variety of shapes. Round, oval, barquette, tall, fluted and smooth ones.

Nozzle

A stainless steel or exoglass tip which is placed in a piping bag and used to decorate cakes. It resembles a cut-off cone, with a small opening in various shapes from oval to star-shaped, for different piping effects.

Oven thermometer

The calibration of ovens varies and can change over time. Using an oven thermometer ensures that your oven is preheated to the correct temperature and that the temperature is maintained throughout the baking period.

Palette knife

A thin metal blade about 2 cm (1 inch) wide and usually 20 cm (8 inches) long that is attached to a wooden or plastic handle, either straight or stepped. A palette knife is used for separating pastry from the work surface, removing cakes from tins, and for chopping through certain types of pastry to combine ingredients.

Pastry brush

A brush used to glaze pastry with either a mixture of egg yolk and water, or to glaze confections with syrup or jam. Also used to brush excess flour from pastry.

Pastry cutter

A metal or plastic utensil used for cutting out well-defined shapes. Pastry cutters can come in many different shapes, such as hearts, animals, flowers and so on.

Pastry scraper

A metal implement with a wooden handle used for scraping off any mixture that has stuck to the slab or countertop. A small knife or metal spatula can just as easily be used.

Pastry blender

A small handle with looped cutting blades attached at each end in a hoop used for chopping fat into flour. Two knives or metal palette knives used scissor-fashion can be used for the same purpose.

Pastry slab

A slab made from a naturally cool material such as marble used for mixing and rolling out pastry. Choose a slab with the dimensions of at least 70 x 70 cm (28 x 28 inches). Too small and it will make the preparation of the pastry difficult. Too large and it will be cumbersome to move. A pastry slab can be replaced with an oilcloth on a table, or with the table itself, providing there are no grooves in the wood and the table is spotlessly clean. If you have granite, Formica or Corian countertops you will not need a pastry slab.

Pastry wheel

A small wheel, either plain or fluted, and mounted on a thin, straight handle that enables you to cut pastry dough without tearing it. A sharp knife can be used instead to give straight cuts.

Pincers/crimping tongs

A metal implement with two sections and serrated tips that enables you to seal and decoratively crimp the edges and borders of tarts and pies.

Piping bag

A funnel-shaped bag of coarse plastic-coated fabric. A nozzle is lowered into the small opening. Piping bags can be used to pipe out cake or biscuit mixtures, or to pipe decorative icing onto cakes.

Rack

A round, square, or rectangular utensil made of wire, about 25 cm (10 inches) in diameter or 25 cm (10 inches) square, or 27 x 40 cm (11 x 16 inches). Racks are essential for cooling cakes and biscuits.

Rolling pin

A cylindrical implement for rolling out pastry, usually made of very smooth wood (preferably beech), either with or without handles. A rolling pin without handles is easier to use because it gives you more control, but a rolling pin with handles is more comfortable to use for many people. At a pinch, a rolling pin can be replaced by a bottle that is totally cylindrical in shape. Modern silicone rolling pins are non-stick.

Spatula

A plastic scraping blade attached to a wooden handle. Used to handle uncooked and cooked mixtures without having to touch them with your hands.

Spoon

Large metal spoons are useful to fold mixtures together without knocking out air that has been beaten into them. The thin metal edge cuts through the mixtures.

Sugar thermometer

Modern sugar thermometers measure in degrees centigrade and Fahrenheit to determine the concentration of a sugar syrup. In the past, a hydrometer was used to indicate the density of sugar syrup. These hydrometers are still sometimes used by professional chefs, particularly for sugar work.

Whisk

Several thin wires looped around and attached to a handle used to aerate mixtures, particularly egg whites. There are many different sizes of whisk, but the largest whisk you can hold which still feels comfortable in your hand will be the most useful. Whisks also come in hand-held electric versions.

Wooden spoon

To help you mix various ingredients evenly. You will need several in different sizes.

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

It is extremely useful to be as familiar as possible with the nature of the essential ingredients used in home baking. Home bakers are careful to use only fresh products, the source or origin of which is recognised and regulated.

Cocoa powder

For use in baking, this is made from finely ground fermented cocoa beans. It does not contain sugar.

Chocolate

Block chocolate consists of cocoa solids, cocoa butter and a varying amount of sugar. Sometimes other ingredients are added such as milk solids to make milk chocolate, vanilla for flavour, and lecithin for emulsification. For cooking, it is best to choose plain chocolate with a high proportion of cocoa solids, normally 60–72%, for best flavour. The cocoa butter content gives ease of melting. This is sometimes called *couverture*, meaning coating, because it is often used to coat cakes and biscuits. Choose a chocolate flavour that you like: some chocolate is too bitter.

Eggs

The weight of a medium egg without its shell is 50–60 g ($1\frac{3}{4}$ –2 oz). When making cakes and some pastries the whole egg may be used, or just the yolk, or just the white. The yolk, high in fat content, binds various pastries, adds colour to them and imparts a characteristic flavour. Egg white (albumen) has a particular viscosity, which enables it to stiffen when whisked energetically. Beaten egg white is formed of small air bubbles, which make any mixture to which it is added much lighter. When whisking egg whites, start gently and slowly, then gradually increase the speed. To facilitate the process add a drop of lemon juice or a pinch of salt to the egg whites. An electric whisk makes this task a breeze.

Always use a broken egg immediately: the yolk will spoil quickly. You can use this part of the egg immediately in a variety of desserts and cakes and should avoid throwing it away if possible. Unused egg whites may be frozen for later use. It is essential, for the purposes of home baking, to know how fresh an egg is. Egg whites keep up to three weeks in the fridge as they contain a natural antioxidant. To test the freshness of an egg, place it in a bowl of water. A fresh egg will immediately sink to the bottom and lie flat on its side.

A bad egg will float in the water and should be discarded. Old egg whites are also preferred for making meringues because they whip up more easily.

Fats

Cream. Fresh cream should always be used in baking and will have a subtle, very pleasing taste. Whipped, sweetened with sugar or flavoured with vanilla, it is often used to decorate pastries.

Butter. Very high in fat content (about 85%), it plays an important role in pâtisserie. As soon as oxidation begins to take place, butter becomes rancid and gives an unpleasant taste to mixtures. Check its temperature before you use it. Unless otherwise stated, butter should always have the same consistency as the dough or mixture to which it is added. Too much butter in a pastry will make it softer but also much too crumbly.

Oil. Some mixtures and doughs have oil added to them to make them crisper. Use fresh oil of the type specified in the recipe.

Flavourings, extracts, liqueurs and spirits

Among these are fruit and flower extracts, cordials and fortified wines. Their flavour is concentrated, so use sparingly and with discrimination. Choose natural flavourings and extracts for the best flavour.

Vanilla is used widely in pâtisserie to flavour custards, cakes and biscuits. It can be used in the form of an extract or as a whole bean. Always use a natural extract, not a chemical essence. To use a whole vanilla pod, infuse it in the liquid from the recipe, usually milk or cream, for at least 10 minutes, then split it lengthways using a small, sharp knife. Scrape the seeds from the inside the pod and add to the recipe. Discard the pod or add to a container of white sugar to make vanilla sugar.

Flour

Found in practically all pastry, cake and biscuit recipes, flour is the powder obtained by grinding the grains of some cereals, usually wheat. Sometimes you can substitute polenta flour, buckwheat flour, barley flour or chestnut flour.

Wheat flour, however, remains the most popular choice. This is made up of about 75% starch; 10% protein; 1% fat; 13% water and 1% mineral salts.

Starch is the most nutritious element in flour. There are two proteins in flour, glutenin and gliadin, that when combined with liquid and worked cause the flour

to become an elastic, smooth dough. Good flour should be yellowish white in colour, soft to the touch, and have a pleasant smell. It cannot be stored for long, just a few months at most. If you use too much flour in a cake mixture it will have a slightly bitter taste and be very dry in consistency.

Fruit

A very important ingredient in pâtisserie, not least because it adds to the nutritional value (mineral salts, acids, fructose, vitamins). Fruit also enhances the appearance and taste of pâtisserie. It plays a very important decorative role, whether it is fresh or cooked, crystallized or dried, or in the form of jam.

Liquids

Water and milk are often used to moisten doughs and batters. Milk will increase the nutritional value of the dough.

Nuts

Almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts and peanuts, which all have a high nutritional content, make delicious cakes and biscuits, adding both texture and flavour. Ensure nuts are fresh by buying only what you require. Nuts can also be stored in the freezer.

Potato flour

This starch can be used in pastry making. It yields light results and keeps well. However, a dough made with potato flour does not have the same smoothness as one made with ordinary flour. Potato flour can replace ordinary flour in a recipe that does not call for fermentation. Potato flour is very bright white in colour, and very soft to the touch. It makes little squeaking sounds when worked with your fingers.

Raising agents

Leaven or yeast and chemical raising agents are used to make baked products lighter.

Yeast. This contains lactic-acid producing bacteria, fermenting enzymes, and cells of brewer's yeast which need moisture and gentle heat before they can become active. Under the right conditions, the cells react with the various components of dough and produce carbon dioxide. It takes several hours for dough to rise. The carbon dioxide gas bubbles expand in the dough and make it swell so that it increases in

volume and becomes lighter in texture. Baker's yeast must be very fresh if it is to work effectively. Dried yeast is available in powdered form and is reconstituted with liquid either directly or by combining first with flour then liquid. Check the use-by date to ensure it is still active.

Baking powder. A white powder made with bicarbonate of soda, cream of tartar, and a small quantity of starch. The release of carbon dioxide is instantaneous upon contact with liquid and continues under heat.

Bicarbonate of soda. Sometimes small quantities of bicarbonate of soda or ammonium bicarbonate are used instead of baking powder; if too much of either is used, the taste can be unpleasant. If too much raising agent or leaven is used, the dough will be so light that the texture will be affected. If the dough has risen excessively, it will sink quickly.

Rice flour or ground rice

Ground white rice is often used in shortbread and gluten-free baking.

Salt

Salt is indispensable in baking. It adds flavour and balances what would otherwise be too sugary, sweet and insipid a taste if sugar alone were used. The salt should be very finely ground, like table salt.

Sugar

Most often beet or cane sugar (sucrose) are used. Sugar comes in many different forms: sugar cubes, granulated sugar, caster sugar, icing sugar. Sugar is differentiated according to the fineness of its grains. Sugar added to pastry dough and other pâtisserie mixtures can add colour and facilitate browning during cooking; it will make it sandier in consistency.

Sugar reacts adversely with iron. It is therefore essential to exclude this metal from all equipment used in pâtisserie or confectionery. Sucrose is capable of crystallization. Very often, glucose is added to a syrup, which will then not crystallize at all. Industrial manufacturers of pastries, cakes and sweets sometimes use glucose, which is three times less sugary than sucrose. Brown sugar, honey, and molasses are also used in cooking. These sweeteners hold moisture, thereby producing moister and softer cakes and biscuits.