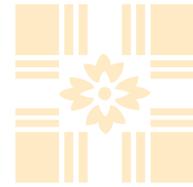


# Gluten-free Cooking and Baking



**M**aking delicious gluten-free desserts without wheat flour is entirely possible. All of my recipes have been taste-tested by people who are not gluten-free to ensure they are not just “good for gluten-free” but are good, period.

My hope is that this cookbook will be a springboard for you. Many of the recipes can be mixed and matched, allowing you to come up with your own personal creations. Don't be afraid to try new things. Cooking, after all, isn't brain surgery; it needn't be serious or arduous. Have fun. Experiment. Sometimes we learn more from our failures than our successes. The best part of learning to cook and bake gluten-free is eating the results afterward!

## Ingredients

As with anything, in cooking the best results come from starting with the best ingredients. Use fruits and vegetables that are ripe and in season, keep your flours and nuts fresh by storing them in the freezer and, if you can afford it, buy organic butter and eggs. Here is a list of ingredients I use over and over again in my recipes.

**Agave Nectar.** Previously available only in health food stores, agave nectar is now widely available. I live in a small town and can find it in the regular grocery store. It has a much lower glycemic index than sugar. The light agave is closest to the flavor of granulated sugar and the amber has a richer, almost caramel flavor that pairs well with coffee and chocolate.

**Almond Flour.** For grain-free desserts almond flour is a terrific alternative.





I use only finely ground, blanched almond flour. It is available in health food stores, on the Internet, and some grocery stores.

**Baking Powder.** A leavening agent that helps cakes and breads rise, I use aluminum-free, double-acting baking powder.

**Baking Soda.** For recipes that contain acid such as citrus juice or buttermilk, baking soda helps them rise. I use Arm & Hammer baking soda.

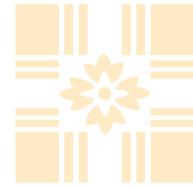
**Butter.** I only use unsalted butter. I like salt as much (if not more) than the next guy but I like to control the amount of salt that goes into my food. If you only have salted butter, make sure to decrease the amount of salt in the recipe. People who can't tolerate dairy can usually use organic butter as it is virtually free of the milk proteins that are normally problematic. However, I am not a doctor so please get expert advice on this if dairy is an issue. Good-quality, dairy-free butter substitutes such as Earth Balance can easily be substituted for butter in my recipes.

**Buttermilk.** Some of my recipes call for buttermilk. The acid in the buttermilk makes for a tender final product. If you don't have buttermilk on hand, you can make your own substitute by adding 1 tablespoon of freshly squeezed lemon juice or white vinegar to every cup of milk or dairy-free milk. Stir and let sit for 5 minutes before using.

**Chocolate.** Many chocolate chips (especially store brands) contain vegetable oil fillers. I prefer to use premium chocolate and chocolate chips. Ghirardelli is a trusted brand that is available in most grocery stores. Bittersweet or dark chocolate should be at least 60 percent cacao. Look for dairy-free chocolate if you can't tolerate dairy.

**Citrus Juice and Zest.** Please, please, please use freshly squeezed citrus juice and freshly grated citrus zest. The imitation stuff just doesn't taste the same and as always, fresh is best.

**Coconut Milk.** This is my favorite dairy substitute for baking and making desserts. As coconut milk will separate in the can (the fat rising to the top) it is very important to shake the can well before using. When using only part of a



can of coconut milk in a recipe I always pour it from the can into a clear jar with a lid. It stores well in the refrigerator, and I can see that the coconut milk and fat are properly combined.

**Cornmeal.** Ground from corn, cornmeal comes in white and yellow varieties and various grinds. I use it to add a rustic texture to cakes and muffins.

**Cream.** Unless stated otherwise, I use heavy whipping cream in all recipes that call for cream. Heavy cream has a higher fat content than whipping cream and will hold up longer allowing you to prepare your desserts ahead of time without losing volume or quality.

**Dairy.** About half the people who are gluten intolerant can't tolerate dairy, either. Many recipes in this book are specifically dairy-free but for those that are not you can usually substitute nondairy milk. I prefer to use coconut milk in baking and cooking.

**Eggs.** I always bake with large eggs, and whenever possible I prefer to use organic.

**Espresso Powder.** I use instant espresso powder for baking to make coffee-flavored dishes and to intensify the taste of chocolate. Instant espresso powder is available in most grocery stores but if you can't find it just use instant coffee granules. Decaf is fine.

**Extracts.** Use only pure vanilla or almond extracts, not imitation. Imitation extracts are not only inferior in taste but can contain gluten.

**Flours.** There are a variety of gluten-free flours available at health food stores and on the Internet. A partial list includes white rice flour, brown rice flour, sweet rice (or glutinous) flour, amaranth flour, buckwheat flour, chestnut flour, coconut flour, cornmeal, millet flour, quinoa flour, sorghum flour, tapioca flour, and teff flour. No one flour can be successfully substituted for wheat flour. See more on this in the section on Sweet Rice Flour Blend (page 14).

**Liqueurs.** Most liqueurs are gluten-free due to the distillation process. If you are not sure about a specific product, check the manufacturer's Web site for allergen information.





**Nonstick Cooking Spray.** Look for sprays that contain *only* oil. Some brands add flour, which is definitely *not* gluten-free.

**Oats.** For a long time oats were forbidden on a gluten-free diet. This was not because the oats themselves contain gluten but because of the growing and milling practices, which allowed the oats to be contaminated with gluten. Look for certified gluten-free oats.

**Oil.** As a rule I prefer grapeseed oil in baking. It can withstand high temperatures, is loaded with antioxidants, and has a neutral taste. Any neutral-tasting oil can be substituted.

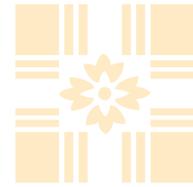
**Salt.** My recipes call for kosher or fine sea salt. If you use table salt decrease the amount of salt called for by half.

**Spices.** Use only fresh, good-quality spices. It is a good idea to go through your spice cabinet every six months and purge the old and replace with the new. If possible buy whole spices and grind or grate as needed.

**Starches.** Used for thickening sauces and adding bulk and texture to baked goods, starches are an important element in gluten-free cooking. For thickening puddings, sauces, and custards my recipes call for cornstarch as it is readily available. For people with a sensitivity to corn, arrowroot can be substituted for cornstarch using a 2:3 ratio; 2 teaspoons of arrowroot equals 1 tablespoon of cornstarch. Arrowroot has a tendency to become slimy when mixed with milk products. Tapioca is a neutral-flavored starch that is excellent when made into pudding and my choice of thickener for fruit pies. It is important to use instant (minute) tapioca or tapioca starch when baking pies.

**Sugar.** I stock pure cane granulated, brown, and confectioners' sugar. Each has its own unique qualities and purposes.

**Xanthan Gum.** Without gluten, flour lacks elasticity and baked goods will not rise properly or hold together when baked. For people with corn allergies guar gum can be substituted using a 1:1 ratio. Xanthan and guar gums may seem to be expensive ingredients but a little goes a long way, and they last almost indefinitely stored in an airtight container in the freezer. Guar gum is much



less expensive than xanthan gum. Both can be found at health food stores and on the Internet.

## Equipment

One needn't acquire every kitchen gadget or piece of equipment to produce good food. Having some basics, however, makes life so much easier. Here is a list of what I consider the essentials.

**Electric Mixer.** I used to think cookbook authors who started a recipe with "In an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment . . ." were pretentious. This was before my husband bought me a KitchenAid stand mixer. When I state using a paddle or whisk attachment realize that this is the preferred way, not the only way. For years and years I got along just fine with nothing but an electric hand mixer. In an ideal world one would possess both a stand and hand mixer.

**Food Processor.** Cooking is certainly possible without a food processor, but once one has gotten used to the ease and quickness of food prep using one, it's hard to go back. I have three food processors of different sizes, which may be a tad excessive, however when one has only a half cup of nuts to chop, it is a joy not to have to drag out the heavy machinery when my mini food processor works just great.

**Blender.** Often the food processor can be substituted for a blender, but there are times when the blender is more efficient and less messy. Mine has only one speed, high, and I have never found myself thinking "Gee, I wish it had nine more speeds."

**Ice Cream Maker.** Nothing can compare to homemade ice cream. You control the quality and freshness of the ingredients and can create any flavor your heart desires. This is especially essential if dairy is an issue for you. I prefer the electric kind where you freeze the bowl; much simpler and less messy than the old-fashioned, hand-crank variety.





**Silicone Baking Mats.** Years ago these nonstick miracle baking mats were expensive and could only be found in gourmet kitchen stores, but now they are readily available. I have owned the same pair for more than twelve years and when I think of the amount of parchment paper I would have used instead, they would still have been a bargain at twice the price. No matter how nonstick your baking pans claim to be, nothing can compare to these baking mats, and they are much easier to clean than a baking sheet.

**Ice Cream Scoops.** Not just for ice cream, these spring-action scoops are great for measuring out batter cookies and cupcakes. Not only is the batter easier to scoop but the portions will be the same, ensuring even baking. I have an assortment of sizes.

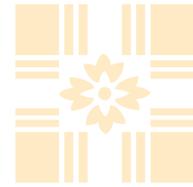
**Knives.** The first investment any cook should make is in a set of good, sharp knives. With proper care, good-quality knives can last a lifetime.

**Pots and Pans.** Another essential investment for every kitchen is a set of good-quality, heavy-duty pots, pans, and skillets. Thin saucepans can't stand up to really high temperatures for tasks such as making caramel. I also believe every cook should have a well-seasoned, cast-iron skillet.

**Baking Pans.** It is a good idea to have an array of baking pans, baking sheets, pie plates, muffin pans, and such. I prefer heavy-duty pans as they ensure proper baking, even browning, and don't warp in the oven. I have muffin pans in three sizes: mini, standard, and large. I also can't live without a spring-form pan. With cake pans it is always a good idea to have a pair in a matching size; this way you can bake layer cakes in one go. Flat baking sheets are best for cookies, and rimmed baking sheets are useful for making cookie bars.

**Mixing Bowls.** I have a variety of sizes of mixing bowls in both glass and metal. Glass can go in the microwave, and metal can be put on top of a pan of simmering water for gentle cooking or melting, eliminating the need for a double boiler. Plastic bowls get scratched and warp over time.

**Strainer.** A strainer is a great multitask piece of equipment that can be used for draining off liquids, removing seeds from berry sauces, and sifting



and dusting cocoa powder or confectioners' sugar on top of finished desserts. A tiny strainer is handy when you need to dust cocoa or confectioners' sugar onto something small like a muffin or cupcake.

**Wire Cooling Racks.** Wire racks allow the air to circulate when cooling baked goods; important in stopping residual cooking.

**Spatulas.** I am in love with silicone spatulas and have replaced all my old rubber variety spatulas with them. They come in an array of shapes and sizes, are flexible enough to fold egg whites or whipped cream, and will not melt when used in a pan of hot liquid. I also have flexible and sturdy metal spatulas for removing cookies from baking sheets and flipping crepes and what not. It is a good idea to have offset spatulas as well. They make the job of frosting cakes and cupcakes so much easier. I have two sizes, one small one for cupcakes and cookies and one large one for cakes.

**Measuring Cups and Spoons.** Liquid and dry ingredients are measured differently and for that reason it is a must to have dry and liquid measuring cups. I prefer to have a liquid measuring cup that is heatproof so I can put it in the microwave or pour hot liquid into it without the fear of melting. Dry measuring cups and measuring spoons should be constructed so it is easy to scoop the ingredients into them and level off the excess.

**Whisks.** It is a good idea to have an assortment of whisks on hand for mixing; in most cases they are more effective than using a spoon. If I have just a little bit of cream to whip, I will use a whisk instead of dragging out the heavy artillery.

**Pastry Brush.** Use for brushing off excess flour, topping scones with cream, or tidying up the final look of cookies. Look for well-made, good quality brushes with bristles that won't come off on your food. They now make silicone pastry brushes that also work very well.

**Microplane Grater.** The easiest way to grate ingredients such as chocolate, nutmeg, or cinnamon is with a Microplane grater. It also makes zesting fresh citrus an easy chore.





**Oven Thermometer.** Oven temperatures vary, often widely. I have two ovens; one runs about 25 degrees cool and the other almost 75 degrees hot. For this reason I suggest buying an oven thermometer; inexpensive ones can be found in almost any hardware or grocery store.

**Kitchen Timer.** When baked goods are in the oven I don't necessarily want to stay in the kitchen waiting for them. I like a timer I can carry with me so I don't risk burning my desserts.

**Parchment Paper.** While I do rely on my silicone baking mats I still stock parchment paper for lining cake pans, cooling nut pralines, and such. It does not burn in the oven and, unlike wax paper, will not leave wax on your baked goods.

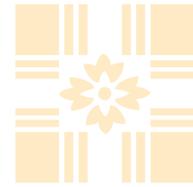
**Plastic Food Storage Bags.** As well as using them for storing food, I fill the bags with frosting or cream, snip off the end, and use as a piping bag. They are disposable, work well, and are less messy than traditional pastry bags.

**Paper Muffin Liners.** Eliminating the need to grease and flour your muffin pans, paper liners also make for easy cleanup when baking muffins and cupcakes. They come in a variety of colors and styles, including silicone muffin liners, which can be washed and reused.

## Cooking and Baking Tips

With a few basic tips you can be baking gluten-free like a pro. In this book I include the tips specific for each recipe to ensure that you get a good result. Here are some general tips you may also find useful.

**Room Temperature Ingredients.** When baking, often the recipe will call for room-temperature ingredients. Having all the ingredients at room temperature will ensure better blending of the batter and a more even baking time. Take the ingredients out of the refrigerator 20 to 30 minutes before starting the recipe. When a recipe calls for separated eggs at room temperature, it is



easier to separate the whites from the yolks when the eggs are cold. Separate them first and then let them come to room temperature. Butter and cream cheese must be at room temperature before creaming to ensure that the air is whipped in properly.

**Measuring.** For dry ingredients scoop the ingredients into the measuring cup and scrape off the excess with a flat edge such as the back of a knife. The same holds true for spices; scoop then scrape. Dry ingredients should never be measured in a liquid measuring cup; the amount will not be the same as in a dry measure.

**Adding Eggs to Batters.** Most recipes will call for adding the eggs one at a time and mixing each in thoroughly before adding the next one. This is the typical method when the batter starts with creaming the butter and sugar. The reason for this is that you have just incorporated air into the butter and if the eggs are added all at once the batter could lose volume as the air pockets you have created by creaming will collapse. The batter may also break and look curdled. If the batter breaks, it is not the end of the world and the batter is still usable.

**Properly Beaten Egg Whites.** As you beat egg whites they go through various stages. They start off a very pale yellow color, turn foamy, get white, and finally turn into stiff peaks, which are glossy and smooth. Overbeaten whites will look lumpy, drier, and dull. They start to form clumps. Overbeaten egg whites are more likely to collapse in the oven. If you must err, err on the side of slightly underbeaten whites rather than overbeaten. The only exception would be if the recipe states to beat the whites until they are dry. The reason for this would usually be that whatever they are mixed with has a high liquid content. When adding sugar to egg whites, beat the whites until they get foamy and then gradually add the sugar. This will help to better incorporate the sugar into the whites. Always use a clean mixing bowl and clean beater for beating egg whites as any fat or oil will impede their forming stiff peaks.





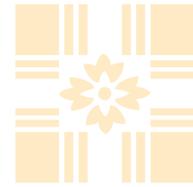
**Checking for Doneness.** As I mentioned earlier, oven temperatures vary. It is always a good idea to check your baked goods for doneness a few minutes prior to the end of the stated baking time. In this book, I try to tell you what the recipe should look, feel, or smell like when done so you can rely on your instincts rather than baking times.

**Sunken Cakes.** Some gluten-free cakes will naturally sink in the middle as they cool. This would usually be the case with flourless cakes. For cakes that contain flour the reason for this could be either that the cake is not done in the middle or too much leavening was used. If the cake is baking too quickly at the edges and remains uncooked in the center, you need to turn your oven temperature down and possibly extend the baking time. If the cake rises and sinks because of too much leavening, use less. As a rule of thumb, 1 to 1¼ teaspoons of baking powder per cup of flour is ideal. In recipes calling for baking soda, ¼ to ½ teaspoon is usually sufficient for each cup of flour. Baking soda is only used when the ingredients include an acid such as citrus juice, buttermilk, sour cream, or yogurt.

**Proper Mixing.** While I love to mix batter with my stand mixer I always give a final mix with a spatula to ensure all the ingredients are properly mixed. There is just no way for the beaters of a mixer to do a thorough job. This seems to be especially important with gluten-free baking. Overmixing can cause heavy cakes. While some think that this is from stimulating the gluten (which would make this a needless worry in gluten-free baking), actually what happens is overmixing destroys the tiny air bubbles you have incorporated into the batter, thus causing a heavy cake.

**Adding Flour in Batches.** Most cake and cupcake recipes will ask you to add the flour in either two or three stages, alternating with whatever liquid is going into the batter. This ensures proper mixing without overworking the batter.

**Folding in Ingredients.** Folding in is a way to combine ingredients without knocking out the air; this is typically used when working with beaten egg whites or cream. A rubber or silicone spatula is the best tool for the job. To properly fold in ingredients take some of the lighter mixture (such as beaten



egg whites or cream) and mix it with the heavier mixture (such as chocolate or beaten egg yolks), then take the rest of the lighter ingredients and add it to that mixture (lighter on top of heavier). Using the spatula, reach down to the bottom of the mixing bowl and lift some of the heavier ingredients up and onto the lighter ingredients. Turn the bowl about a quarter of a turn and repeat until the mixtures are combined. Use quick, fluid strokes and try to incorporate the ingredients with as few strokes as possible. Don't be timid! The longer it takes you to combine the ingredients, the more the air bubbles are deflated. Combine just until the mixture is no longer streaky in appearance.

**Settling the Batter.** Rapping a cake or muffin pan on the counter a few times will force air bubbles to the top and ensures even baking. It also helps even out the batter so it is not higher on one side than the other.

**Rotating Pans During Baking.** Some parts of an oven are usually hotter than others. Rotating the pans a quarter-turn halfway through the baking time ensures even baking. If pans are placed on two different racks in the oven (one higher up than the other), switch them as well.

**Oven Rack Position.** Unless the recipe states otherwise, place the oven rack in the middle of the oven, which is best for baking.

**Whipped Cream.** For the best result use heavy whipping cream. It has a higher fat content and will stay whipped longer. It is a good idea to start with a cold mixing bowl and cold beaters. Add sugar (if called for in the recipe) before beating the cream and add any extracts after the cream starts to form peaks. Do not overbeat cream or it will turn into butter. Whipped cream can be prepared ahead of time, especially if you use heavy whipping cream. A little tip is to put the whipped cream into a strainer placed over a bowl, and keep it in the refrigerator until ready to serve; any liquid that seeps out will drain off.

**Stabilized Whipped Cream.** Whipped cream makes a simple and delicious frosting for cakes, it can however make the cake harder to store or transport as the cream can start to melt. Stabilizing the whipped cream helps solve the problem. For every 1 cup of cream you will need 1 tablespoon cold water





and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon unflavored gelatin. Pour the water into a small microwave-safe bowl. Sprinkle the gelatin on the water and let it set for 5 minutes. This is called “blooming the gelatin.” Microwave the bloomed gelatin for 10 seconds on high power, or until it is melted but not hot. Whip the cream until it starts to stiffen up. Add the gelatin all at once and continue to whip until soft or stiff peaks form. If you are sweetening the cream, add sugar to the heavy cream before starting to whip it. Add any extract after the peaks have formed.

**Saving Egg Whites and Yolks.** Often a recipe will call for just the egg whites or just the yolks. Whenever just the yolks are needed, do not toss out the whites. Egg whites can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for several days; in fact macaroons are best made with “old” egg whites. For longer-term storage, drop the individual egg whites into the cubes of an ice cube tray. Freeze and then pop the cubes into a freezer-weight plastic storage bag. Simply thaw and use when needed. Yolks dry out after a day or two in the refrigerator. If possible, keep the yolks whole and drop into a container with water; this will prevent them drying out. Yolks can be stored, refrigerated, for up to two days.

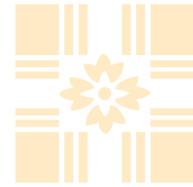
**Nondairy Whipped “Cream.”** A good nondairy substitute for whipped cream is whipped coconut milk. Refrigerate 3 cans of full-fat coconut milk until cold. Refrigerate a mixing bowl and beaters. Open the cans with a can opener that completely removes the top of the can. Skim the cream from the top being careful not to get any of the liquid from the bottom of the can. Whip the coconut cream with 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar until thick and stiff. Add vanilla or other extract, if desired. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

## Sweet Rice Flour Blend

No single flour can replace wheat flour in gluten-free baking. Gluten is a sticky protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and other grains. It is what makes pizza

*Simply . . . Gluten-free Desserts*

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dough stretchy, cakes rise, and baked goods hold together. Gluten-free flours need to be combined with starches and gums in order to react the same way that wheat flour does. Most gluten-free cooking and baking failures occur when the flour blend used does not contain enough starch and gum additives to make up for the lack of sticking power found in gluten. When I first went gluten-free I shied away from traditional baking because it seemed like too much trouble to combine various flours. I soon found that in reality it takes only a few short minutes to mix up a batch of gluten-free flour blend.

There are commercially produced gluten-free flour blends available at health food stores and on the Internet, and recently I have started to see some brands showing up on regular grocery store shelves. You can use those pre-packaged blends in the recipes in this book, but I find these products are usually too gritty for my tastes, something especially unappealing when it comes to desserts.

After much trial and error I finally came up with a flour blend that works perfectly in gluten-free baking. This is my preferred flour mix and can be substituted for wheat flour cup for cup. It is called Carol's Amazing All Purpose Gluten-Free Flour and is available commercially.

I also developed a recipe for a flour blend you can make at home that will give you very similar results.

You are going to love this flour mixture. Believe me when I say no one can tell the final product is gluten-free. I taste-tested this flour blend on many, many people who customarily eat wheat and quite a few who shy away from "alternative foods." The comments were unanimously very positive; people either could not tell the desserts were gluten-free or, in fact, preferred the dishes to those prepared with wheat flour.

The ingredients in this blend are white rice flour, sweet (or glutinous) rice flour, tapioca starch, potato starch, and xanthan gum.

**White Rice Flour.** Not all rice flours are created equally. I prefer to use superfine rice flour or Asian rice flour. Superfine white rice flour is available on





the Internet and in health food stores and Asian white rice flour is available in Asian markets, on the Internet, and in some grocery stores in the ethnic section. Superfine and Asian rice flours are much more finely milled than other rice flours. Asian cultures have been making fine delicacies with rice flour for centuries and have perfected the art of milling it. If you ever want to try a little test, rub some regular white rice flour between your thumb and forefinger and then do the same with some superfine or Asian white rice flour. You will notice the difference immediately. There is no grittiness at all with the superfine and Asian flours.

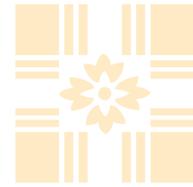
**Sweet Rice Flour.** Sweet rice flour is also called glutinous rice flour but don't let the name alarm you. Glutinous refers to the fact that the type of rice it is milled from is especially sticky. There is no gluten in sweet or glutinous rice flour. Again I use either superfine or Asian sweet rice flour. The addition of sweet rice flour helps with browning and makes baked goods more tender. Glutinous rice flour can also help smooth out the grittiness that comes from regular white rice flour.

**Tapioca Starch.** Tapioca is a gluten-free starch that can be used for thickening sauces, puddings, and pie fillings, and helps baked goods hold together. Without tapioca, baked goods would fall apart if only gluten-free flours were used. It is also sometimes called tapioca flour.

**Potato Starch.** Potato starch is not to be confused with potato flour; they are *not* interchangeable. Potato starch adds bulk and sticking power to gluten-free flour blends. Potato starch can be purchased in health food stores and over the Internet.

**Xanthan Gum.** Xanthan gum is a binding agent, which will keep your gluten-free baked goods from falling apart. It is the most expensive ingredient in this sweet rice flour blend but very little is used per batch of flour. Xanthan gum is derived from corn so if you have a sensitivity to corn substitute guar gum.

Before I make up the flour blend I empty the individual bags of flours and



Makes 9 cups  
flour mix

starches into their own freezer-strength plastic storage bags and label them. This makes scooping and measuring easier and I store the bags in the freezer. I make up a batch of this flour blend and store it in a canister so it is always on hand when the mood to bake strikes me. You can also store it in a large plastic storage bag in the freezer.

This sweet rice flour blend is so fine it does not need to be sifted before use.

<b>4½ cups white rice flour</b>	<b>1 cup tapioca starch (also known as tapioca flour)</b>
<b>1½ cups sweet (glutinous) rice flour</b>	<b>4 teaspoons xanthan gum</b>
<b>2 cups potato starch (not potato flour)</b>	

Measure each ingredient by scooping it into a measuring cup (or spoon), leveling it off with a straight edge, such as the back of a knife. In a large mixing bowl, whisk all ingredients together very well until they are evenly distributed. I whisk the ingredients slowly for at least a minute or two, making sure to get to the bottom of the bowl and turning the ingredients over and over.

This recipe can easily be halved, doubled, or tripled.

