VINTAGE KITCHEN NOTES

Make-Ahead Baking Guide

How far ahead you can bake, and how to bring it back on the day. Wrap everything well and label it with the date.

Pies

TYPE OF BAKE	MAKE AHEAD	FRIDGE	FREEZER	ON THE DAY
Traditional crust (fruit pies)	Dough disks, or the whole pie assembled and unbaked	Dough 2–3 days; baked pie 1–2 days at room temp, then fridge	Dough 3 months; unbaked assembled pie 3 months	Bake from frozen, adding 15–20 min. Rewarm a baked pie at 300°F (150°C) for 10–15 min
Crumb crust	Press and bake the crust	Baked crust 2 days; filled pie 3–4 days	Unbaked or baked crust 1 month	Fill and chill. Add whipped cream just before serving
Pumpkin, sweet potato & pecan	Bake the whole pie 1–2 days ahead	3–4 days, always chilled	Up to 1 month; the filling can weep a little	Serve chilled, or let it sit 30 min at room temp
Cream & meringue	Crust only	Filled pie 1 day at most	Don't freeze	Fill and top on the day, or the day before

Cakes, cheesecakes & bars

TYPE OF BAKE	MAKE AHEAD	FRIDGE	FREEZER	ON THE DAY
Layer & sheet cakes	Bake the layers, unfrosted	2–3 days unfrosted	2–3 months, unfrosted	Frost the day before or the morning of. Chill if the frosting has cream cheese
Cheesecake	Bake 1–3 days ahead; it needs the chill time anyway	Up to 5 days	1–2 months, without topping	Add the topping just before serving
Bars & brownies	Bake and leave uncut	4–5 days	3 months, as a whole slab	Cut while cold for clean edges

Cookies

TYPE OF BAKE	MAKE AHEAD	FRIDGE	FREEZER	ON THE DAY
Drop cookies	Scoop the dough into balls	Dough 2–3 days	Dough balls 3 months; baked cookies 3 months	Bake from frozen, adding 1–2 min
Cut-out cookies	Dough disks, or baked undecorated cookies	Dough 3 days	Dough or baked cookies 3 months	Decorate 1–2 days before serving

Muffins, breads & rolls

TYPE OF BAKE	MAKE AHEAD	FRIDGE	FREEZER	ON THE DAY
Muffins	Bake fully	4–5 days	1–2 months, wrapped individually	Warm at 350°F (180°C) for 5–8 min
Quick breads	Bake fully; often better on day two	1 week	3 months, whole or sliced	Slice and serve, or toast
Yeast rolls	Bake fully, or shape and refrigerate overnight	Shaped dough overnight; baked rolls 1 week	Baked rolls 1 month	Bake chilled rolls after 30–45 min at room temp. Rewarm baked ones under foil at 325°F (165°C)

Crisps, crumbles & toppings

TYPE OF BAKE	MAKE AHEAD	FRIDGE	FREEZER	ON THE DAY
Crisps & crumbles	Topping, or the whole dish assembled and unbaked	Topping 1 week; baked crisp 3–4 days	Topping 3 months; unbaked assembled crisp 3 months	Bake from frozen, adding 20–30 min. Rewarm uncovered so the top crisps
Streusel & crumb toppings	Mix and store	1–2 weeks	3 months	Use straight from the freezer; break up large clumps

Keep it safe

Anything with custard, cream or cream cheese goes back in the fridge within 2 hours of serving.

Wrap it well

Plastic wrap plus foil, or an airtight container, keeps freezer burn and fridge smells away.

Trust your oven

Times are a guide. Check early, especially when baking straight from frozen.