

Buttermilk Biscuits

Yield 12 large biscuits

2 cups unbleached white flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
6 tablespoons butter (about 1/3 cup)
3/4 cup buttermilk

Preheat the oven to 450°.

Sift all of the dry ingredients into a large bowl. Cut in the butter using a knife, a pastry cutter, or your fingers, until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal.

Quickly, but gently, stir in the buttermilk, just until the dough holds together. Don't overstir or the biscuits will be tough. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured board and knead gently with floured hands. Press the dough into a ball, cut it in half, place one half on top of the other and press down. Repeat three or four times. Then roll out the dough to about 1/2-inch thickness. Cut rounds with a biscuit cutter or glass, or cut rectangles with a knife. Place the biscuits on an ungreased baking sheet leaving a little space between them.

Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until the biscuits are golden. Serve warm with butter, preserves, or plain.

Variations Wheat Germ Biscuits: Reduce the flour to 1-3/4 cups and add 1/4 cup wheat germ. Proceed as directed.

Cornmeal Biscuits: Reduce the flour to 1-3/4 cups and add 1/4 cup stone ground white or yellow cornmeal. Proceed as directed.

Pecan Biscuits: Stir 1/4 cup ground toasted pecans into the sifted dry ingredients. Proceed as directed.

Red Pepper-Cheese Biscuits: After cutting the butter into the sifted dry ingredients, stir in 1/2 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese and a pinch or two of cayenne pepper. Mix well. Proceed as directed.

Shortcake Biscuits: Add 2 tablespoons of sugar to the dry ingredients and 2 teaspoons vanilla extract to the wet ingredients. For a shortcake biscuit deluxe, add 1/4 cup of ground pecans as well. Proceed as directed.

Source: Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant Cookbook