

Health concerns beat out convenience

By Marilyn Marter

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Just when it seemed that folks had settled neatly into the habit of choosing convenience over economy and commercial over homemade when it came to baking mixes, there appeared this little blip on our culinary radar screen.

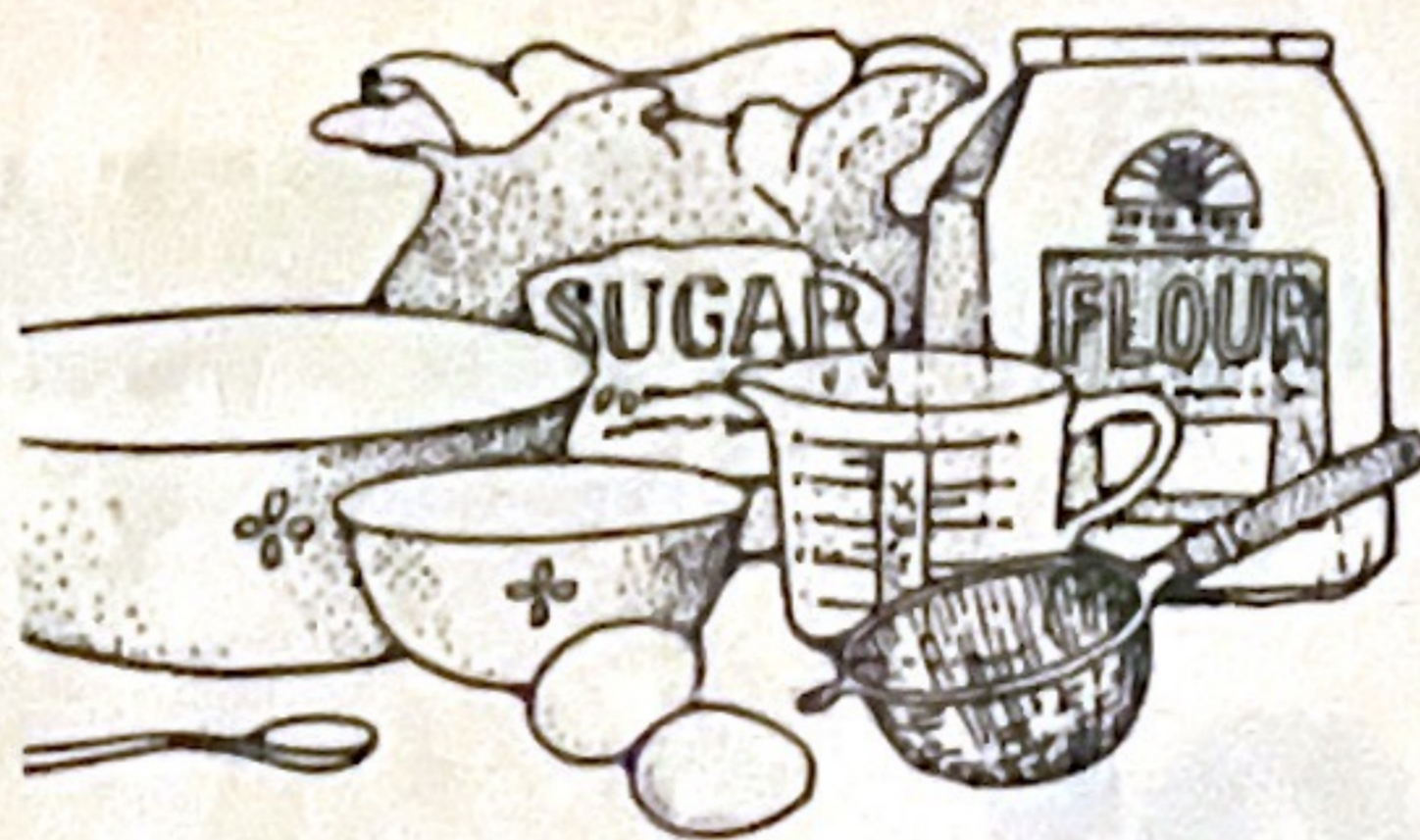
■ Do we have a recipe to make a mix resembling one popular brand, a reader wanted to know. "While I enjoy the convenience of the baking pre-mix, it is too salty for me to use very often."

■ "As I do not use animal fat in my cooking, I would appreciate your sending me a recipe to substitute for" a national brand that contains animal fat, another wrote.

■ And, still another request: "In a recent recipe, you listed one of the ingredients as 'basic baking mix.' Could you please tell me what basic baking mix means?"

The product in question comes labeled both as "baking mix" and "biscuit mix" at the supermarket, where it is boxed and marketed under several different brand names, among them Bisquick and Jiffy as well as several store brands. The mix can be used in a variety of ways, with different additions, to produce basics such as biscuits, pancakes and muffins as well as a range of entree-type recipes.

There are several variations on recipes for making a homemade version of this product, which only approximates the name-brand formulas. This version includes both powdered milk and vegetable shortening in the mix. Thus, for some



uses, you can simply add water. Many cooks, however, prefer the nutritional bonus of using fluid milk along with the dry.

Clearly, the consuming interest now is more health-related than price-conscious, and that's probably the best reason of all. Saving time and money is a nice bonus.

BASIC BAKING MIX

- 4 cups (1 pound) all-purpose or cake flour
- ½ cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 2 tablespoons double-acting baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt or to taste
- 1 cup solid vegetable shortening

In large bowl or container, mix or sift together flour, dry milk powder, baking powder and salt. Rub or cut shortening into the dry ingredients to the consistency of cornmeal. Shortening should be cold. Store mix in an airtight container

in a cool, dry place. Makes about 6 cups. Use as directed below.

Note: Recipe may be doubled. The cooler the temperature, the longer this mix will keep fresh. Storage times range from six weeks at room temperature to a year, if refrigerated.

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As for using this mix, it may be substituted in any recipe calling for commercial baking or biscuit mix.

BASIC BAKING MIX BISCUITS

2 cups Basic Baking Mix (recipe above)

½ cup milk or water, approximately

In mixing bowl, combine baking mix and milk, by tablespoons, using only enough liquid to moisten dry ingredients and make a soft dough. Stir with a fork. Knead dough lightly about 10 times or roll and fold a few times on a lightly floured surface. Be careful not to handle dough too much or you'll toughen the biscuits.

Pat or roll dough to half-inch thickness. Let dough rest about 5 minutes before cutting into 2-inch circles. Arrange closely in a lightly greased 9-inch baking pan or on a baking sheet. Bake at 450 F for 10 to 12 minutes, or until golden brown. Makes about 12 biscuits.

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