

NOVEMBER

Baking School In-Depth: Yeastened Angel and Buttermilk Biscuits

Our Southern roots may be showing with this one, but is there really anything better than a biscuit? Deliciously flaky, buttery biscuits full of fluffy height—it's hard to imagine anything more comforting. Whether leavened with yeast, like our Yeasted Angel Biscuits that bake to new heights with Quick-Rise™ Instant Yeast from Red Star®, or laminated with butter to create tender layers, like our beautiful Buttermilk Biscuits, there's no denying the irresistible pull of a freshly baked biscuit. With this month's module, you'll learn the ABCs of biscuit-baking (angel, buttermilk, and Cheddar!), from cutting in butter to mixing and shaping your dough and everything in between.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each of our recipes' simple ingredients contributes to making the very best Yeasted Angel and Buttermilk Biscuits.

YEASTED ANGEL BISCUITS:

INSTANT YEAST: Angel biscuits are often best described as a cross between a biscuit and a dinner roll. To achieve an incredibly light and fluffy texture, we use Quick-Rise™ Instant Yeast from Red Star®, which provides a faster leavening rate, reducing rising times in traditional baking by as much as half compared to a regular active dry yeast. Yeast needs food (sugar and carbohydrates), warmth (liquid temperature and room temperature), and moisture for proper fermentation. Yeast is killed at 139°F (59°C), so keep your thermometer on hand when heating your buttermilk.

BUTTERMILK BISCUITS:

UNBLEACHED CAKE FLOUR: Cake flour, unlike all-purpose, is lower in protein and creates softer, more delicate bakes. So, when it's used in combination with all-purpose flour, you get a biscuit with a light and airy interior but a satisfying bite. Many biscuit recipes will call for self-rising flour, which is made up of a softer, lower-protein version of all-purpose flour premixed with baking powder and salt. To have better control over our biscuits' leavening and protein content, we use unbleached cake flour instead, used in combination with a harder flour and leavening agents to create our ultimate Buttermilk Biscuits.

BOTH:

UNSALTED BUTTER: Our biscuits are all about butter. We use unsalted European-style butter in all our biscuit recipes because of its high fat content. With a pastry blender, forks, or a food processor, the butter is cut into the dough until it's pea-size or smaller. In the Yeasted Angel Biscuits, the butter is frozen to prevent melting, and the miniature chunks of butter create small pockets of steam when the biscuits hit the oven and the butter melts. With the Buttermilk Biscuits, the butter is again frozen then broken up into pieces pea-size and smaller, but the dough is then stacked and rolled out to create lift and layers. Instead of having small pieces or chunks of butter that create air bubble-like holes, rolling and pressing the dough (similar to how you laminate puff pastry) creates thin sheets of fat between the dry ingredients. As they melt away and steam, the leavening happens, and flaky layers are formed. These small pockets of butter are essential in both recipes, so it's important not to overmix; otherwise, the butter will melt into the dough, losing its structure and creating tough rather than fluffy biscuits.

WHOLE BUTTERMILK: The acidity in buttermilk combined with the fat content courtesy of its whole milk base works as the ultimate tenderizing ingredient. Buttermilk brings signature tang, and the acidity also plays a key role in softening the gluten found in the flour, creating a beautifully fluffy biscuit. Not to mention, it's the wet ingredient that brings the biscuit dough together. In our Yeasted Angel Biscuits, the buttermilk also serves the essential role of activating the yeast. If you have difficulty locating whole buttermilk, you can make a quick substitution. Simply add 1 tablespoon (15 grams) distilled white vinegar or fresh lemon juice for every 1 cup (240 grams) whole milk. Let stand for 5 minutes to allow mixture to thicken.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: For a delicate crumb, a special flour that balances between soft and hard is needed. All-purpose wheat flour has a protein content of 10% to 12%, so our biscuits are tender but have enough gluten structure to hold together. The biggest mistake you can make with biscuit dough is overmixing, because the more the gluten is activated, the tougher, gummier, and chewier your biscuits will be.

GRANULATED SUGAR: Sugar, also referred to as glucose, acts as food for the yeast in our Yeasted Angel Biscuits, which converts it to carbon dioxide and alcohol in the fermentation process. This ultimately helps tenderize the dough, creating soft, fluffy biscuits. In both biscuits, the sugar also adds a tinge of sweetness to balance the salt, contributes to the biscuits' golden color, improves their crumb texture, and helps to retain moisture both while the biscuits bake and once stored.

KOSHER SALT: Kosher salt has a pure, clean flavor because it doesn't contain iodine or minerals. When it comes to salt, one important thing to note is that salt granules come in different sizes and densities, so be sure to weigh your salt for the most accurate measure.

BAKING POWDER: Comprised of baking soda, powdered acid or acids, and a starch, most baking powders are double-acting, meaning the reaction occurs twice, using two different acids. The first is a very quick reaction that occurs when baking powder is combined with a liquid, aerating the batter. The second reaction is slower-acting, occurring when heated.

BAKING SODA: Baking soda requires an acid be present in the batter (in this case, buttermilk) to help tenderize baked goods. Baking soda releases most of its gas immediately once combined with an acid and moisture, so doughs and batters leavened only or primarily with baking soda should be baked soon after it's added. If too much is used, the final baked product may have a slightly soapy taste and a brownish-yellow cast. If too little is used, making the batter or dough too acidic, the final product may not brown adequately.

SALTED BUTTER: Brushing biscuits with melted salted butter before baking helps to create a more even, golden color while also creating a crisper texture on top. A final brush of butter after baking adds a final touch of richness and flavor.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

To make the best biscuits, we recommend this set of tools



PASTRY BLENDER OR FORKS: Cutting in butter is an essential part of both of our biscuit recipes. We recommend using a pastry blender or two forks to assist in breaking up your butter into pea-size pieces. (Pictured is the Williams Sonoma Olivewood Pastry Blender.)

BENCH SCRAPER: Whether you're looking for an easy way to lift and transfer your biscuits from counter to baking sheet, an extra nudge to bring your dough together, a tool that can trim and help shape your biscuits, or a way to clear your work surface, the bench scraper is your new best friend. (Pictured is the Williams Sonoma Goldtouch® Pro Silicone and Nylon Bench Scraper.)

2½-INCH ROUND CUTTER: For our Yeasted Angel Biscuits, we use a round cutter to perfectly portion each one. (Pictured is a Williams Sonoma Biscuit Cutter.)

SHARP CHEF'S KNIFE: When cutting your Buttermilk Biscuits, it's important to use a sharp knife coated in flour. The sharpness of the knife, combined with the flour coating, will prevent the dough from being pulled, sealing the edges of the biscuit. Let those beautiful layers shine!

PASTRY BRUSH: Brushing the scones with butter before and after baking is really the metaphorical icing on the cake in this recipe. It's important that the bristles of the brush are sturdy yet flexible, which is why we often opt for a pastry brush with bristles instead of silicone. (Pictured is the Williams Sonoma Olivewood Pastry Brush.)

SPATULA, WHISK, AND GLASS BOWLS: For all your mixing needs, you really can't beat the basics. Spatulas are perfect for simple stirring and folding, whisks are essential in mixing dry ingredients and breaking up clumps, and glass bowls give you a 360-degree visual while staying cool (glass doesn't conduct heat well).



YEASTED
ANGEL
BISCUITS



YEASTED ANGEL BISCUITS

Makes 16 to 18 biscuits

Supremely light and fluffy, these biscuits use three leavening agents—yeast, baking powder, and baking soda—to achieve their angelically airy texture. Best described as a mix between a flaky buttermilk biscuit and a soft yeast roll, these Yeasted Angel Biscuits are as simple as they are delicious.

- 1 cup (227 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
 - 2 cups (480 grams) warm whole buttermilk (110°F/43°C to 115°F/46°C)
 - 1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) instant yeast*
 - 6 cups (750 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
 - ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
 - 5 teaspoons (15 grams) kosher salt
 - 1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder
 - ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- Salted butter, melted

1. Freeze cold butter for about 10 minutes.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together warm buttermilk and yeast until yeast dissolves. Let stand until foamy, 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
4. In a large bowl, combine 3 cups (375 grams) flour and sugar. Add yeast mixture, and stir until just combined. Let stand for 3 to 5 minutes.
5. In another medium bowl, whisk together salt, baking powder, baking soda, and remaining 3 cups (375 grams) flour. Add cold butter, tossing to coat. Using a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in cold butter until pieces are smaller than peas and mixture is crumbly. Add to flour-yeast mixture. Using your hand, knead dough in bowl until dough just comes together.
6. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface. Press or roll into a 1-inch-thick disk. Fold dough in half;

- press or roll into a 1-inch-thick disk. Using a 2½-inch round cutter dipped in flour, cut dough without twisting cutter, and place about ½ inches apart on prepared pan. (See Note.) Reroll scraps once by pushing scraps together, folding in half, and then pressing or rolling to 1-inch thickness. Discard remaining scraps. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until puffed, about 15 minutes.
7. Brush top of biscuits with melted butter.
8. Bake until golden brown, 10 to 14 minutes. Brush with melted butter, and serve warm.

**We used Quick-Rise™ Instant Yeast from Red Star®.*

Note: *Biscuits can be baked touching if you want a softer biscuit. If you like a biscuit with crispy edges, bake about ½ inches apart. Biscuits that are touching will take longer to bake, and biscuits with space between them will bake faster.*



BUTTERMILK BISCUITS



BUTTERMILK BISCUITS

Makes 9 biscuits

A true classic, our Buttermilk Biscuits are rich, tender, and full of lovely layers. Warm and buttery in flavor, they're excellent in both sweet and savory applications. A plate full of these is sure to go quick at your next breakfast or brunch get-together.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (170 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
 - 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
 - $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups (208 grams) unbleached cake flour
 - 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar
 - 1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder
 - 1 tablespoon (9 grams) kosher salt
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
 - $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups (320 grams) cold whole buttermilk
- Salted butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Freeze cold butter for about 10 minutes.
3. In a large bowl, stir together flours, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Add cold butter, tossing to coat. Using a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in cold butter until mixture is crumbly and largest butter pieces are pea-size. (See Notes.) Using a fork or your fingers, stir in cold buttermilk until a dough forms. (It is OK if there are some dry flour bits remaining.)
4. Turn out dough onto a clean surface. Pat or roll dough into an 8-inch square (about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick). Using a sharp chef's knife or bench scraper coated in flour, cut dough in half. Stack halves on top of each

other, and pat down into a square. Repeat procedure twice, making sure to press back into an 8-inch square. Using a chef's knife coated in flour, trim edges, if desired, to create a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -inch square, and cut dough into $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch squares. Place 2 inches apart on prepared pan. (See Notes.) Freeze until cold, about 10 minutes.

5. Brush tops with melted butter.
6. Bake until golden brown, 15 to 18 minutes. Brush with melted butter, and serve warm.

Notes: A food processor can be used to cut butter into the dry ingredients. Place dry ingredients into the work bowl of the food processor, and pulse until combined. Add cold butter, and pulse until mixture is crumbly and the largest butter pieces are pea-size. Transfer to a large bowl before adding buttermilk.

Biscuits can be baked touching if you want a softer biscuit. If you like a biscuit with crispy edges, bake about 2 inches apart. Biscuits that are touching will take longer to bake, and biscuits with space between them will bake faster.





CHEDDAR
BUTTERMILK
BISCUITS

CHEDDAR BUTTERMILK BISCUITS

Makes 9 biscuits

Using our base *Buttermilk Biscuits* recipe, we added garlic powder, green onion, white Cheddar cheese, and dill to create a savory flavor explosion. The melty cheese is sharp and salty, and the green onion and dill cut through with a fresh green bite. These cheesy biscuits will be a favorite any time of day.

- ¾ cup (170 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
 - 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
 - 1⅓ cups (208 grams) unbleached cake flour
 - 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar
 - 1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder
 - 1 tablespoon (9 grams) kosher salt
 - 1 teaspoon (2 grams) garlic powder
 - ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
 - 3 ounces (85 grams) sharp white Cheddar cheese, shredded (¾ cup)
 - ½ cup (45 grams) finely chopped green onion
 - 2 tablespoons (7 grams) lightly packed finely chopped fresh dill
 - 1⅓ cups (320 grams) cold whole buttermilk
- Salted butter, melted

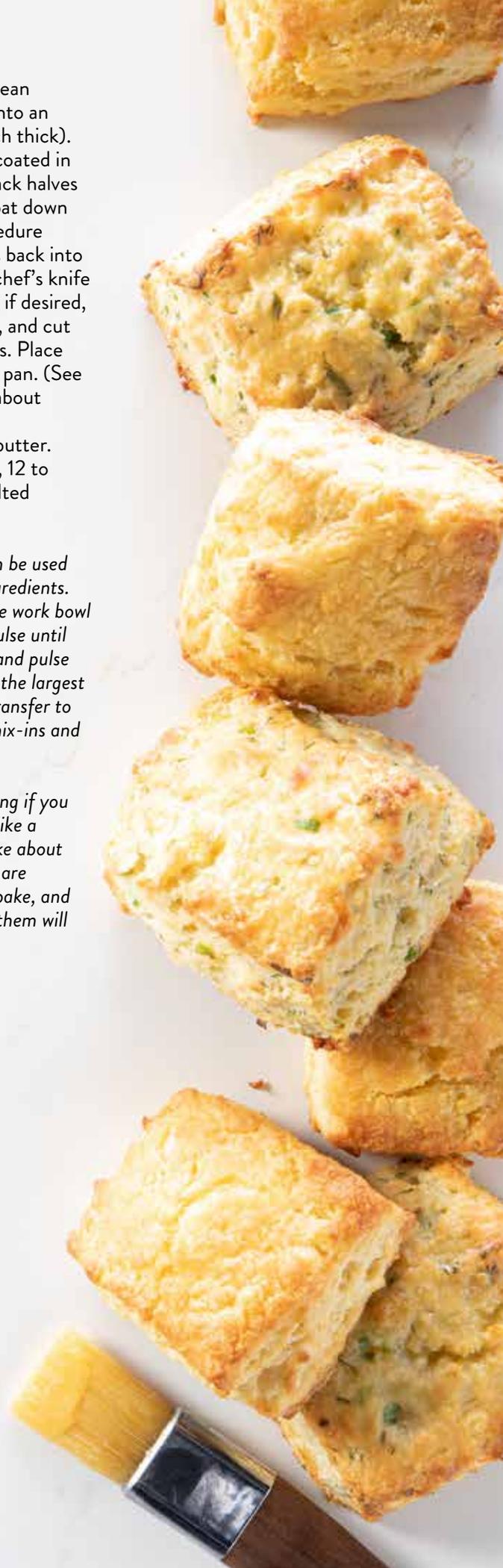
1. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Freeze cold butter for about 10 minutes.
3. In a large bowl, stir together flours, sugar, baking powder, salt, garlic powder, and baking soda. Add cold butter, tossing to coat. Using a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in cold butter until mixture is crumbly and largest butter pieces are pea-size. (See Notes.) Stir in cheese, green onion, and dill. Using a fork or your fingers, stir in cold buttermilk until a dough forms. (It is OK if there are some dry flour bits remaining.)

4. Turn out dough onto a clean surface. Pat or roll dough into an 8-inch square (about ¾ inch thick). Using a sharp chef's knife coated in flour, cut dough in half. Stack halves on top of each other, and pat down into a square. Repeat procedure twice, making sure to press back into an 8-inch square. Using a chef's knife coated in flour, trim edges, if desired, to create a 7½-inch square, and cut dough into 2½-inch squares. Place 2 inches apart on prepared pan. (See Notes.) Freeze until cold, about 10 minutes.

5. Brush tops with melted butter.
6. Bake until golden brown, 12 to 16 minutes. Brush with melted butter, and serve warm.

Notes: A food processor can be used to cut butter into the dry ingredients. Place dry ingredients into the work bowl of the food processor, and pulse until combined. Add cold butter, and pulse until mixture is crumbly and the largest butter pieces are pea-size. Transfer to a large bowl before adding mix-ins and buttermilk.

Biscuits can be baked touching if you want a softer biscuit. If you like a biscuit with crispy edges, bake about 2 inches apart. Biscuits that are touching will take longer to bake, and biscuits with space between them will bake faster.



HOW-TO: YEASTED ANGEL BISCUITS

These biscuits are all about incorporating air, from the yeast that produces air bubbles to the butter that creates little steamy pockets when baked. Overmixing is your enemy, so be sure to knead the ingredients just until they come together.

1. **Freeze cold butter for about 10 minutes.** European-style butters soften very quickly because of their high fat content. We freeze our butter to make it easier to cut in and keep its shape once all the ingredients are mixed together.
2. **In a medium bowl, whisk together warm buttermilk and yeast until yeast dissolves.** When heating the buttermilk, it might separate slightly; that's OK—just stir it, and it will emulsify again. Let stand until foamy, 5 to 10 minutes.
3. **Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C).** Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.



4. **In a large bowl, combine 3 cups (375 grams) flour and sugar. Add yeast mixture, and stir until just combined. Let stand for 3 to 5 minutes.**

HOW-TO: YEASTED ANGEL BISCUITS



5. In another medium bowl, whisk together salt, baking powder, baking soda, and remaining 3 cups (375 grams) flour. Add cold butter, tossing to coat. Using a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in cold butter until pieces are smaller than peas and mixture is crumbly. It's important that the butter is pea-size or smaller because when the warm flour-yeast mixture is added, the butter will become melty and messy if left too large. So, make sure your butter pieces are nice and small. Add to flour-yeast mixture. Using your hand, knead dough in bowl until dough just comes together. It's important not to over-knead the dough; otherwise, your biscuits will be tough and difficult to press out into a disk in the next step.

HOW-TO: YEASTED ANGEL BISCUITS



6. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface. Press or roll into a 1-inch-thick disk. Fold dough in half; press or roll into a 1-inch-thick disk. Using a 2½-inch round cutter dipped in flour, cut dough without twisting cutter, and place about 1½ inches apart on prepared pan. (See Note.) Reroll scraps once by pushing scraps together, folding in half, and then pressing or rolling to 1-inch thickness. Discard remaining scraps. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until puffed, about 15 minutes.

7. Brush top of biscuits with melted butter.

HOW-TO: YEASTED ANGEL BISCUITS

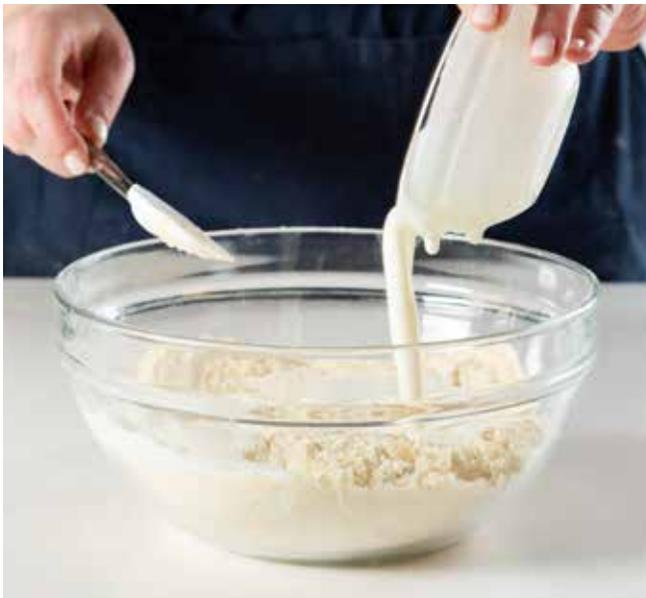


8. Bake until golden brown, 10 to 14 minutes. Brush with melted butter, and serve warm.

HOW-TO: BUTTERMILK BISCUITS

These biscuits are incredibly simple to make and require only a handful of ingredients. The true challenge is resisting overmixing and overworking the dough; otherwise, your laminated layers will disappear.

1. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Freeze cold butter for about 10 minutes. European-style butters soften very quickly because of their high fat content. We freeze our butter to make it easier to cut in and keep its shape once all the ingredients are mixed together.



3. In a large bowl, stir together flours, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Add cold butter, tossing to coat in flour mixture. Using a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in cold butter until mixture is crumbly and largest butter pieces are pea-size. (See Notes.) If making the Cheddar Buttermilk Biscuits, this is where you'll stir in the cheese, green onion, and dill. Using a fork or your fingers, stir in cold buttermilk until a dough forms. (It is OK if there are some dry flour bits remaining.)

HOW-TO: BUTTERMILK BISCUITS



4. Turn out dough onto a clean surface. Pat or roll dough into an 8-inch square (about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick). Using a sharp chef's knife or bench scraper coated in flour, cut dough in half. Stack halves on top of each other, and pat down into a square. Repeat procedure twice, making sure to press back into an 8-inch square. This process is called laminating, and it's what gives these Buttermilk Biscuits flaky layers. Using a chef's knife coated in flour, trim edges, if desired, to create a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -inch square, and cut dough into $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch squares. Place 2 inches apart on prepared pan. (See Notes.) Freeze until cold, about 10 minutes.

HOW-TO: BUTTERMILK BISCUITS



5. Brush tops with melted butter.
6. Bake until golden brown, 15 to 18 minutes. Brush with melted butter, and serve warm.