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Question:

I recently moved to Germany, but still love to bake good ol' American chocolate chip cookies. □ However, I have encounter a problem in getting all of the needed ingredients together. □ First, there is no "packed" brown sugar, so I have to use natural raw brown sugar (basically the same as white, only brown). □ Secondly, I cannot buy baking soda anywhere. □ Can I use baking powder as a substitute? □ Do you know of any substitutes I could use for baking soda? Thanks - M. Wefering (2/18/02)

Answer:

Baking powder and/or baking soda is used as leavening in many cookie recipes. Baking soda helps neutralize acidic ingredients. Baking powder and baking soda are not interchangeable and there is no substitution for baking soda.

Try the pharmacy, or the pharmacy section of the supermarket, and ask for bicarbonato. Baking soda is also called sodium bicarbonate in Britian, or NaHCO₃.

Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) is used as a leavening agent when a recipe contains acid ingredients. Baking soda, an alkaline ingredient, plus an acid ingredient, such as buttermilk, vinegar, molasses or sour cream creates a chemical reaction to form carbon dioxide gas in a baked product making it rise and become light and porous. Heat is not necessary for the chemical reaction, so the reaction begins as soon as liquid ingredients are added. Therefore, products leavened with baking soda should be baked immediately after mixing or the gases will escape and the product will not rise.

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