Let’s talk about cake flour!

You might recognize cake flour as that ever-present box in the back of your parents’ refrigerator. Maybe that’s just me. My mom always had a box of cake flour in the fridge.

Cake flour is a finely ground flour used in many (but not all) cake recipes. Cake flour has a lower protein content of about 8%, as compared to a 10-11% protein content in all-purpose flour. The protein is important! It helps to add structure to our cakes. The lower protein content of cake flour ensures that our cake layers have structure and a soft and light (not tough) texture. Cake flour is especially important in chiffon or [**Angel Food Cake**](http://joythebaker.com/2011/07/angel-food-cake-with-vanilla-strawberries/). Cake flour is our friend, and we should have it in our pantry… but we probably don’t.

You may be fresh out of cake flour when the need for cake arises. I understand this all too well! Luckily, we can easily make a substitute for cake flour using ingredients you probably already have in your kitchen: all-purpose flour and cornstarch. Good news, right?

**How To Make Cake Flour:**

Measure out 1 cup of all-purpose flour. Remove 2 tablespoons of all-purpose flour and place it back in your flour canister. Replace the removed all-purpose flour with 2 tablespoons of cornstarch.

Sift flour 5 times. Yes… 5 times. Sifting the flour and cornstarch together will help thoroughly combine the mixture and help to lighten and aerate the flour.

By replacing a bit of the all-purpose flour with cornstarch, we’re removing some of the gluten and replacing it with a tenderizing element. But cornstarch is so neutral, how is it a cake tender? Well, cornstarch works alongside other cake ingredients (like sugar, for example) to inhibit gluten development. It’s ingredients like sugar and cornstarch that compete with the flour for liquid absorption (think: eggs and buttermilk) in a recipe. If flour gets to gobble up all of the liquid in a recipe and is worked in a mixer (like we work cake batter), it’s gluten development will be off the charts… and you’ll basically have a baguette. Cornstarch (and sugar) makes the flour share liquid, easing the gluten development and creative beautifully tender cake texture.

*Joy The Baker*