

# Q&A

This month, **Yvonne Maffei** discusses the differences between bicarbonate of soda and baking powder, and what to do about mouldy cheese.



*If cheese has gone mouldy, is it still okay to eat it, since some cheeses like blue cheese are technically mouldy cheese?*

For the most part, most mould on hard cheese can be cut off (about 2.5 cm down), unless it has penetrated deep into the product. That is not the case with shredded or soft cheeses, or any type of cottage or mascarpone cheese products, which should be discarded when mould is spotted. As for blue cheese containing mould, that is a different – and edible – variety added to this specific type of cheese. It's derived from the genus *Penicillium* and is considered a 'helpful' mould found naturally in the environment that is safe for consumption. The mould should be blue so if you spot any other color of mould or the cheese's texture changes in any way (i.e. gets slimy), then it is best to discard it.

**What is the difference between baking soda and baking powder? Are they interchangeable?**

Bicarbonate of soda (baking soda in the USA) and baking powder (baking soda with acid added to it) are two different things that are not interchangeable in cooking or baking; however, they are both pretty important in helping our baked goods rise and fluff.

Baking soda, which is not acidic on its

own, is typically added to recipes with an acidic ingredient already in it, such as buttermilk or citrus; if used alone in baking it releases sodium carbonate and an alkaline aftertaste. Baking powder, on the other hand, has some acid in it already which will make up for that funny after taste. I can attest to doing this with baked goods where I experimented with banana breads by adding both baking soda and baking powder to the mixture. The bread came out light and fluffy but there was a tinge of a metallic aftertaste that I couldn't

pinpoint. After researching the difference in the two key ingredients, I discovered I only needed the baking powder to refine my recipe.

**Do you have any cooking-related questions for Sister Yvonne? Email her on [info@myhalalkitchen.com](mailto:info@myhalalkitchen.com) with 'SISTERS Column Q&A' in the subject line.**