

Fish

In tropical countries it is safest to buy only fish that are still alive. A fish that is not alive, but is perfectly fresh, has bulging bright eyes and bright red gills. The flesh is firm and elastic and has a distinctly fresh odor.

Oysters should be bought live, but if the vendor presents them already shucked, be sure the meats are plump, have no sunken places, and show no signs of shrinkage. Mussels can be substituted for oysters in any recipe.

Salted fish need the following treatment: Soak in water for 2-3 hours, changing the water frequently. Put a rack into a heavy skillet. Lay the fish on the rack, cover with water, and heat to boiling. Drain. Cover with fresh water and simmer until tender. The fish is now ready to be used in any recipe.

Flour

One way of converting regular flour into cake flour is to mix 30 ml of cornstarch into 25 ml of flour and then sift twice. Another way is to fill the measuring cup with flour and level it off evenly. Take out 30 ml of flour, leaving 220 ml. Sift twice before the recipe's suggestions for more sifting. Neither method is a completely adequate substitute, but they are often the best you can do.

When buying imported flour in a foreign country, don't be bashful about testing the package for softness. This also applies to packaged cake mixes. The package should feel a little resilient under your fingers. Too often moisture has gotten around the containers as they were shipped and the contents have solidified into hard, unusable masses. Flour that is stored for long periods loses much of the air originally milled into it. Sifting several times will restore lightness.

In tropical countries where there are many insects, opened packages of flour should be put into glass jars or tin containers with tightly fitting tops. It is possible to store flour, cake mixes, etc. in the freezer.

Furs

It is best not to take furs to a country that has a consistently hot climate. But if you do take furs to a humid, tropical place here are some tips:

- Keep your furs in a perforated plastic bag, hung where air circulates, because furs have to "breathe." Put a few moth balls in the bottom of the bag but don't let them touch the fur.
- Do not keep furs in a closet or wardrobe in which a light bulb is kept burning to combat humidity; the heat will dry out the skins and make them crack.
- If you get caught in the rain in your fur coat, don't try to protect the skins by turning the coat inside out. They can stand a soaking much better than the lining can. When you get home, give the coat a good shaking and hang it where there is no draft until it dries. Then shake it and brush it.

Gelatin

15 ml thickens 500 ml of liquid. In tropical climates double the amount of gelatin called for in your recipe.