

30 Days of Muffins....Enjoy!!

OK There are very few rules when it comes to how to make muffins. **First, be sure not to over mix the batter.** So, What does that mean? Well, it means that once you add the wet ingredients to the dry, you should **ONLY mix enough to just moisten the dry ingredients.** It's okay to see some streaks of dry. Over mixing makes for a tough, spongy muffin.

Another tip: Make sure to preheat your oven at least 20 minutes before baking to get it up to the right temperature. See below for a basic muffin recipe and a month's worth of variations on it.

Basic Muffin Recipe

2 cups all-purpose flour (to measure, spoon into a cup and level)
1/3 cup sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
1 large egg
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line a 12 cup muffin tin with paper liners. In a large bowl whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl whisk together butter, egg, milk and vanilla. Pour the egg mixture over the dry ingredients and gently fold just until moistened. Scoop batter into the muffin pan and bake until golden brown and firm to the touch, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from pan (cool on a wire rack if you have one).

Muffin Variations

Granola Muffins: Replace the 1 cup milk with 1 1/4 cups buttermilk. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Fold 1 cup of your favorite granola mix into the dry mix. Replace granulated sugar with packed light brown sugar.

Multi-Grain Grain Muffins: Reduce flour to 1-1/2 cups. Add 3/4 cup of assorted grains such as cornmeal, oat bran, wheat germ, ground flaxseeds and oats. Substitute oil for the melted butter. Fold in 1/4 cup of either pumpkin or sunflower seeds at the end.

Bran Muffins: Reduce flour to 1 3/4 cups, add 1 cup wheat bran to flour mixture, swap in buttermilk for whole milk and oil for the melted butter. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda.

Whole-Wheat Muffins: Reduce all-purpose flour to 1 cup and add 1 cup whole-wheat flour. Increase salt to 1/2 teaspoon, reduce milk to 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons and add 2 tablespoons molasses.

Buttermilk Muffins: Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking powder. Substitute 1 cup buttermilk for the whole milk and add 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest.

Muffins with Jam Centers: Spoon batter into pan filling only halfway. Spoon 1 teaspoon of your favorite jam onto batter then top with remaining batter.

Streusel-Topped Muffins: Swap in buttermilk for the milk. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking powder. Swap in brown sugar for the white sugar. Make a mixture of 3 tablespoons cold butter, 1/4 cup brown sugar, 1/4 cup oatmeal, and 1/4 cup flour. Rub this mixture together and spoon onto muffins before baking.

Sour Cream-Brown Butter Muffins: Place butter in a small skillet and cook over medium heat until golden brown. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature. Swap in 1 cup sour cream for the milk. Use 1/2 cup light brown sugar instead of granulated sugar.

Carrot-Currant Muffins: Fold 1 cup shredded carrots and 1/2 cup dried currants into the mix after adding egg. Use 1/2 cup milk and 1/2 cup carrot juice instead of 1-cup milk.

Gingerbread Muffins: Replace granulated sugar with packed dark brown sugar. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Replace 1-cup milk with 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons buttermilk and 2 tablespoons molasses. Add 2 teaspoons ground ginger to dry mix and fold in 1/2 cup chopped crystallized ginger at the end.

Lemon Poppy Seed Muffins: Toast 2 tablespoons of poppy seeds in a 350 degree F. oven until fragrant. Replace milk with buttermilk. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Add 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest to dry mix and 1 tablespoon lemon juice to buttermilk.

Toasted Sesame Muffins: Replace butter with 4 tablespoons vegetable oil and 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil. Fold 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds into dry mix.

Apple Cinnamon Muffins: Increase sugar to 1/2 cup plus 2 teaspoons. Use 1/2 cup of the sugar in the dry mix along with 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Use 3/4 cup buttermilk instead of the milk and reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons. Add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Fold 1 peeled and shredded apple (about 8 ounces) into the wet mix. After folding together, fold 1 cup coarsely chopped dried apple into the mix. Spoon into pan. Combine remaining 2 teaspoons sugar with 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon and sprinkle on top; bake.

Toasted Coconut and Chocolate Muffins: Toast 1 1/2 cups of shredded coconut. Grind 1/2 cup of the coconut in a food processor until the consistency of flour. Reduce flour to 1 3/4 cups plus 2 tablespoons. Fold both the shredded and ground coconut into the flour mixture. Add 1/8 teaspoon almond extract when adding vanilla. Fold in 1-cup mini chocolate chips at the end.

Double Chocolate Muffins: Reduce flour to 1 3/4 cups. Add 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder to the flour along with 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/4 teaspoon allspice and 1/8-teaspoon ground cloves. Replace granulated sugar with packed light brown sugar. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Fold in 1-cup mini chocolate chips before baking.

Vegan Apple-Walnut Muffins: Combine 1 tablespoon ground flaxseeds with 3 tablespoons of water and whip until well combined and gelatinous. Use this mix to replace the egg. Use walnut oil instead of melted butter. Fold one peeled and grated Granny Smith apple (about 8 ounces) into the wet mix. Fold 1/2 cup coarsely chopped walnuts into the dry mix and bake.

Chocolate-Cherry Chunk Muffins: Soak 1 cup dried cherries in milk until tender; drain reserving milk. Fold cherries, 3/4 cup chopped chocolate and 1/2 cup chopped cashews into mix at end.

Gluten-Free Muffins with Sweet Corn and Honey: Omit flour and replace with 2 cups stone-ground cornmeal. Increase salt to 3/4 teaspoon. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Reduce sugar to 3 tablespoons. Add 1/4 cup honey to the milk, whisking to combine. Reduce butter to 4 tablespoons. Bake as above and serve with a drizzle of honey on top.

Blueberry Corn Muffins: Reduce flour to 1 cup and add 1 cup cornmeal. Add 1/4 teaspoon allspice and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper to dry mix. Replace milk with 1 cup plain lowfat yogurt. Fold 1 cup blueberries into batter and bake.

Peanut Butter Muffins: Replace butter with 1/4 cup creamy peanut butter and 2 tablespoons peanut oil, whisking to combine. Increase sugar to 1/2 cup. Fold 3/4 cup of coarsely chopped lightly salted peanuts into the batter at the end.

Jelly-Doughnut Muffins: Increase sugar to 3/4 cup; add 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon and 1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg to dry ingredients. Spoon batter into pans going halfway up. Spoon a teaspoon of your favorite jelly on top, and then cover with the remaining batter. Bake. Sprinkle with

Triple Berry Muffins: Prepare batter and fold in 1/2 cup dried cranberries and 3/4 cup each fresh raspberries and blueberries. Sprinkle tops with granulated sugar before baking.

Butter Pecan Muffins: Sauté 1 cup of pecan halves in butter until browned and toasty. Drain, reserving butter. Once cool enough to handle, coarsely chop the pecans. Add enough melted butter to the butter you drained to equal 6 tablespoons. Replace granulated sugar with maple syrup or agave nectar and reduce the milk to 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons. Fold pecans into the batter at the end.

Savory Muffins

Dried Chorizo and Provolone Muffins: Sauté one small red bell pepper in 1 tablespoon olive oil until tender. Reduce sugar to 2 tablespoons and omit vanilla. Add 1/2 teaspoon smoked sweet or hot paprika into dry ingredients. Fold sautéed pepper, 3/4 cup diced chorizo, and 3/4 shredded provolone into batter. Bake.

Pear, Goat Cheese, and Caramelized Onion: Sauté one medium onion in 1 tablespoon olive oil until golden brown. Reduce sugar to 1 tablespoon and omit vanilla. Fold onion, 1 pear, peeled, cored, and cut into small dice, and 1 cup crumbled soft goat cheese into batter. Omit vanilla. Bake.

Toasted Oat Muffins: Toast 1 1/2 cups rolled oats in a 350 degree F. oven until golden brown. Set 1/2 cup aside. Grind remainder in food processor then add to flour to make 2 cups. Swap in packed light brown sugar for granulated sugar. Reduce baking powder to 2 1/2 teaspoons and add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda. Mix as in original recipe.

Hot and Spicy Cheese Muffins: Add 1/4 teaspoon chipotle chile powder and 1/8-teaspoon cayenne to the dry mix. Fold 1 cup shredded Cheddar into the dry mix as well. Reduce flour to 1-3/4 cups and add 1/4 cup cornmeal.

Savory Corn and Bacon Muffins: Cook 4 strips of diced bacon until crisp. Pour bacon fat into a measuring cup and add enough oil to equal 6 tablespoons. Reduce flour to 1 cup and add 1 cup cornmeal. Omit vanilla and add 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper to flour-cornmeal mixture. Sub the oil mixture for the melted butter and fold bacon in after mixing the wet and dry ingredients. Bake as directed.

Sun-Dried tomato and Parmesan Muffins: Omit vanilla. Add 1/2 cup grated Parmesan and 1/2 cup coarsely chopped plump sun-dried tomatoes to dry mix along with 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper. Reduce sugar to 1 tablespoon and substitute olive oil for the butter.

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