

Light, Nutritious Muffins



I am not a muffin eater. Even if they are locally baked and trustworthy, they are not my thing. If I'm going to have an unhealthy snack, I'd rather have a C'est La Vie croissant or an Epicure almond cookie – or, let me be honest, any of either café's scrumptious treats. However, muffins are following me as of late. Last month, I wrote about carrots, and I included a muffin recipe. I was inspired to create healthy carrot muffins by our friend Carlene and her delicious carrot cake. Then, my friend Natalie was visiting from Boston, and we were perusing one of the recent *Martha Stewart Living* magazines I had lying around. I was just telling her how that magazine is overall useless to me as we stumbled across a section called "Fit to Eat," with a variety of health-conscious muffin recipes. They looked so tasty and included completely nutritious and even low-calorie ingredients, so I decided to test a couple of them for my column.

They did not disappoint. Even my skeptical parents agreed they were *tasty* little things. And, since some research concluded that most standard muffins boast a few hundred calories – Starbucks' lowest calorie muffin, the Low-Fat Multiberry, has 340 calories, and Panera's Carrot Walnut muffin holds 430 – and unhealthy ingredients (sugar, corn syrup, and white flour), I decided these quite nutritious muffins are worth toting around in my bag or giving to my man to have as a golf snack.

Here are the two recipes I have thus far tried, slightly adapted from Martha's. Whole Foods carries most of the dry items in their bulk aisle and the sweeteners (raw honey, Sucanat, and blackstrap molasses) in the baking aisle. Let all muffins cool on a wire rack before storing in an airtight container for up to three days at room temperature.

Oat-Bran Applesauce Mini Muffins

Makes 2 dozen

- 2 cups unsweetened applesauce
- 2 ounces (1/2 cup) Medjool dates, pitted and finely chopped
- 1 cup oat bran
- 1/2 cup 1.5% buttermilk
- 1 large egg
- 2 tbsp raw honey
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons whole wheat flour
- 2 tablespoons ground flax seed
- 1 1/4 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon old-fashioned rolled oats

Preheat oven to 375°F. Coat two mini-muf-

fin tins with cooking spray. [I used non-stick silicone trays that worked wonderfully and didn't require greasing.] Place applesauce and dates in a medium saucepan, and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until mixture is clearly reduced, about 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool completely.

In a large bowl, combine oat bran, buttermilk, egg, honey, and vanilla. Add cooled applesauce mixture, and let stand for a few minutes.

Meanwhile, whisk together flour, flaxseed, baking soda, allspice, and 1/4 cup oats. Stir into bran mixture.

Spoon batter into prepared tins, filling to the brims. Sprinkle remaining tablespoon of oats over the muffins. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 22 minutes.

The recipe notes that each mini muffin has approximately 50 calories, 0.1g saturated fat, 9mg cholesterol, 11g carbohydrate, 99mg sodium, 2g protein, and 2g fiber.

Carrot-Zucchini Yogurt Muffins

Makes 1 dozen

- 1 1/4 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup pecans, toasted and finely chopped
- 1/4 cup toasted wheat germ
- 1/4 cup Sucanat (dehydrated cane juice with a taste similar to brown sugar but less sweet)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and grated on the large holes of a box grater (2 cups)
- 1 large zucchini, peeled and grated on the large holes of a box grater (1 1/2 cups)

1/2 cup plain, fat-free yogurt (Horizon Organic works well)

2 large eggs, separated

2 tablespoons unsulfured blackstrap molasses

2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest

Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat a standard (12-cup) muffin tin with cooking spray. [I again used a non-stick for this one.] Whisk together flour, pecans, wheat germ, Sucanat, baking powder and soda, cinnamon, and salt. In a large bowl, stir together carrots, zucchini, yogurt, egg yolks, molasses, and orange zest. Fold in flour mixture until just combined.

Beat egg whites until shiny, stiff peaks form. Gently fold into carrot mixture. Spoon batter into prepared tin, filling to the brims. Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, about 25 minutes. [Note: They will be very moist in the center when you take them out of the oven, due to the grated veggies and yogurt. Be careful not to overdo the cooking time, as I did the first time around in my attempt to ensure that the centers were completely baked.]

This recipe notes that each muffin contains about: 160 calories, 1g saturated fat, 5g unsaturated fat, 36mg cholesterol, 24g carbohydrate, 201mg sodium, 5g protein, and 3g fiber. Enjoy!

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