

LLI Proudly presents – Muffins, Muffins and Muffins

Muffins originated in the mid-1800 when a pan made of iron or tin cups fastened together by a rack was created. This special baking pan was called “gem” cups and even today muffins are still called gems in some areas of the country.

Muffins are especially appealing since they are convenient and wholesome treats. The next time your family asks, “Is there anything to eat?” think of how easy making muffins for a snack can be. Baking powder and/or baking soda are used to make the muffins rise and to give them a light texture enabling you to have old-fashioned freshly baked goods in less than one hour. They’re certainly not just for breakfast. Muffins are perfect for packed lunches, coffee breaks at the office, a nutrient booster when hiking and camping, or a simple dessert. Whether you’re new to muffin baking or a whiz in the kitchen, the following tips and techniques will help insure baking success.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following techniques lay the foundation for baking skills for great muffins and other baked goodies.

- Read the entire recipe before beginning to make sure you have all the necessary ingredients and baking utensils.
- Remove butter, margarine and cream cheese from the refrigerator to soften, if necessary
- Toast and chop nuts, peel and slice fruit, and melt chocolate before preparing the batter
- Measure all the ingredients accurately and assemble them in the order they are called for in the recipe
- Use the pan size specified in the recipe. Prepare the pans according to the recipe directions. Adjust oven racks and preheat the oven. Check oven temperature for accuracy with an oven thermometer.
- Follow recipe directions and baking times exactly. Check for doneness using the test given in the recipe.

- Check the dates on both Baking Soda and Baking Powder to ensure it is still fresh and useable.

MEASURING INGREDIENTS

Dry Ingredients: Always use standardized measuring spoons and cups. Fill the correct measuring spoon or cup to overflowing and level it off with a metal spatula or knife. When measuring flour, lightly spoon it into a measuring cup and then level it off. Do not tap or bang the measuring cup as this will pack the flour. If a recipe calls for “sifted flour,” sift the flour before it is measured. If a recipe calls for “flour, sifted,” measure the flour first and then sift it.

Liquid Ingredients: Use a standardized glass or plastic measuring cup with a pouring spout. Place the cup on a flat surface, fill to the desired mark and check the measurement at eye level. When measuring sticky liquids, such as honey or molasses, grease the measuring cup or spray it with vegetable cooking spray before adding the liquid to make their removal easier

PREPARATION

Stirred Muffins: The batter for muffins is usually stirred, but may be creamed. For stirred muffins, first combine the dry ingredients together in a large bowl. This is done to distribute the baking powder and/or baking soda with the flour. If the leavening is unevenly distributed, the muffins may have a bitter taste. Next, combine the liquid ingredients in a separate bowl and add them all at once to a well in the dry ingredients. Stir *just* until the dry ingredients are moistened. The batter should be lumpy; the lumps will disappear during baking. Over stirring the batter develops the gluten in the flour causing the baked muffin to have tunnels, peaked tops and a tough texture. Nuts, fruits, chocolate chips and other ingredients are folded gently into the batter at the end. ***Tip – mix chips, nuts or fruit with a little flour before adding to batter so they don’t sink to the bottom of the bowl.***

Creamed Muffins: Creamed muffins have a cake-like texture. In this type of muffin the shortening and sugar are creamed (beaten) together before adding the other ingredients. They are usually a sweeter muffin.

Quick Loaves: The batter for quick loaves is prepared the same way as muffin batter and can also be stirred or creamed. As with muffins, it is important to combine the dry ingredients well and to avoid overbeating the batter.

BAKING

Muffins: Begin by preheating the oven to the recommended baking temperature, and then prepare the muffin pan. The standard size muffin cups vary in size from manufacturer to manufacturer and are generally 2½ to 2¾ inches in diameter. Mini muffin cups vary from 1¼ to 1¾ inches in diameter. Jumbo muffin cups (often called Texas-sized) are about 4 inches in diameter. The muffin cups should be either well-greased or paper lined. When making jumbo muffins be sure to grease the top of the pan so that the batter won't stick. If a recipe does not call for foil or paper liners, grease the muffin cups since that particular batter will stick to the liners when baked. For best results with microwave recipes, line the microwavable muffin pan with double paper baking cups so that the outer liner will absorb the moisture and the inner liner will stick to the baked muffin.

Unless otherwise stated, muffin cups should be filled 2/3 to ¾ full with batter. When adding muffin batter to the pan, a ¼ cup measure or a soup ladle is less messy than a spoon and makes it easier to place an equal amount of batter in each cup. Another good method is using a standard size ice cream scoop. If there is not enough batter to fill all the cups, fill empty cups half full with water to prevent the pan from scorching or warping in the oven. The water also allows for even baking.

Begin checking for doneness at the minimum time given in the recipe. Muffins are done when the center springs back when lightly touched and

generally when a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Check recipes for other indications of doneness.

When muffins test done, immediately remove from cups and cool on a wire rack. If the muffins stick to the pan, let them sit about 5 minutes. The steam from the pan should loosen them. If they still stick, loosen muffins from the pan by running a knife around the edge of the cup. Most muffins are best if they are served warm.

Quick Loves: Fill greased loaf pans $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ full unless otherwise indicated. The loaf is done when it pulls away slightly from the sides of the pan and generally when a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Check recipes for other doneness indicators. It is normal for the loaf to crack across the top during baking. Let the loaf cool in the pan for about 10 minutes, and then remove it to a wire rack. Quick loaves are easier to slice if completely cooled.

STORAGE

Muffins: Store cooled muffins at room temperature in a sealed plastic bag up to three days. For longer storage, muffins may be frozen. Wrap cooled muffins in heavy-duty foil. Seal, label, and date package. For best flavor, use within one month. To reheat, warm the muffins in preheated 350-degree oven for about 20 minutes. Or unwrap and microwave on High (100%) about 45 seconds per muffin.

You can store muffin batter in the refrigerator and bake as needed up to one week. However, the longer the batter is stored, the lower the volume will be of the baked muffin. Baking powder and baking soda work best if baked immediately after mixing. When stored, they begin to lose their leavening power.

Quick Loaves: After the loaves have cooled, wrap well and store at room temperature overnight to let the flavors develop. Quick loaves will stay fresh about one week at room temperature or up to three months in the

freezer. Thaw loaves unwrapped at room temperature. To reheat, cover with foil and heat in preheated 350-degree oven about 10 minutes.

QUICK TIP = If your recipe calls for buttermilk and you don't have any, here's a quick solution you can use:

Combine 1 cup milk with 1 tablespoon lemon juice or white vinegar. Mix well and let stand 5 minutes. Use as buttermilk in any recipe