

Pumpkin Currant Muffins

Makes 18 Muffins

What's a currant? All I know is that it's not a raisin. You can substitute raisins for the currants if you'd like. I think the currants are a better match for the pumpkin in this recipe, but feel free to experiment. You could also use other dried fruit including cherries or apricots. After all, they're your muffins. On the same note, feel free to increase or decrease the amount of spice to suit your taste.

These muffins have half of the butter found in most recipes. If you have to be very careful with your cholesterol, you can completely eliminate the butter and use a total of 3/4 cup of vegetable oil. You won't get any butter flavor, but with the pumpkin and spices, most people probably won't notice.

Toasted wheat germ may look a little expensive when you buy it (usually found in the same grocery store aisle as oatmeal), but it comes out to about 10-15 cents of wheat germ per muffin.

1/3 cup currants

6 tbsp (3/4 stick) butter- preferably close to room temperature

3/4 cup of packed brown sugar

1/3 cup + 1 tbsp vegetable oil

2 large eggs

1 15 oz can of packed pumpkin (NOT pumpkin pie mix)

Mix the following ingredients in a medium-large bowl:

1 1/2 cups of toasted wheat germ

3/4 cup whole wheat flour

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

1 1/2 tsp baking powder

2 Tsp of cinnamon

1 tsp of ground ginger or 1 inch of freshly grated ginger

1/2 tsp ground nutmeg

1/4 tsp ground cloves

Place the currants in a small, heat-proof cup like a pyrex pudding dish. Pour in just enough cold water to cover the currants. Microwave for 45 seconds at 50% power and set the dish aside.

In the bowl of a mixer:

Place the butter and sugar. Beat with an electric mixer on medium until the butter starts to get pale. This will take longer if the butter is cold. As the mixer is running, slowly pour in the oil (about 1 minute) and continue to mix for another 2 minutes. The mixture should look a little fluffy. Add 1 egg at a time with the mixer on low-medium and combine for another minute. Now mix in the pumpkin for about 10 seconds.

Pour in the wheat germ, baking powder, spices, whole wheat flour, and all-purpose flour. Gently mix with the electric mixer or by hand with a spatula just until the ingredients are combined. If you over mix the batter, it will develop a lot of gluten strands and get tough. Drain the currants and gently mix them in to the batter.

Spray the muffin tin with a small amount of cooking spray or use cupcake holders. Spoon in the batter and bake at 375 degrees for about 18 minutes (your oven's cooking time may vary, so check after 15 minutes). A toothpick should come out clean when they're done.

You can also bake the batter in a loaf pan at 350 degrees for about 45-50 minutes if you prefer.