



# Grains of truth about MUFFINS

## Definitions

The name “muffin” either comes from the German word “muffe” or from the French word “moufflet”, meaning soft bread. Muffins are called quick breads because they contain no yeast, and therefore, they don’t require all of the time spent on kneading, rising and resting. You can mix muffins from scratch in about five to ten minutes. If that’s not quite fast enough for you, try a muffin mix.

A muffin’s shape should have a uniform, well-rounded top, free from peaks, with no cracks and be large in proportion to weight. The outside color should be an even golden brown, and be tender, with a pebbly or slightly rough and shiny surface. The inside texture should be moist, tender and light with an even, round-holed grain. The inside color will be creamy white or slightly yellow and free from streaks. Muffins may be varied by adding fruits, nuts, herbs, cheese, chopped meats or spices to the batter.

## Availability

Muffins are available from most wholesale and retail bakers as well as many in-store bakeries. Pre-packaged muffins can be found in the bread aisle of your local convenience and grocery stores. Look for a variety of muffin mixes in the baking aisle of your local grocery.

## Nutritional value

Muffins are high in complex carbohydrates and B vitamins. They are often a good source of fiber if they contain bran, fruits and vegetables and/or are made with whole wheat flour.

Many commercial and scratch recipes are high in fat, often containing 5 to 8 grams per muffin. Low-fat, reduced-fat and no-fat muffins are available in restaurants and grocery stores. You can also buy low-fat and no-fat mixes. Try to experiment with substituting lower fat ingredients, such as egg substitute, skim milk and low-fat margarine, when making muffins from scratch.

## Preparation

**Pans:** Muffins will brown best if shiny metal muffin pans are used for baking them. Fill the muffin-pan cups  $\frac{2}{3}$  full with batter. They will rise above the pan surface.

- ◆ Tip: Tins should be greased rather heavily on the bottom for easy removal of muffins. Greasing the sides very lightly, or not at all, allows the batter to cling to the tins in rising, thus increasing volume.
- ◆ Tip: To keep muffins from burning around the edges, leave one muffin cup empty; fill  $\frac{2}{3}$  with cold water before baking.

**Mixing:** Combine dry and liquid ingredients separately. The egg should be beaten enough to combine well with the liquid, then all liquids mixed thoroughly together. Cool melted shortening before it is added. Under-blending of liquid ingredients produces a muffin with thicker cell walls and a less tender texture.

The liquid mixture is stirred with the combined dry ingredients only until the flour is moistened. It is essential to keep mixing to a minimum, no more than 25 to 30 strokes. The batter should be lumpy not smooth. Over-mixing might result in peaked tops, a tough muffin and “tunnels.”

- ◆ Tip: For high altitudes, reduce baking powder or soda in the recipe by  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon.
- ◆ Tip: If using a self-rising flour, omit baking powder and salt.
- ◆ Tip: Use an ice cream scoop to fill the cups in the muffin pan. This will measure your batter equally for each muffin.

**Baking:** Preheat the oven before starting to mix the ingredients. Muffins are usually baked on a high setting of 425°F for about 20 to 25 minutes. Check the recipe or package directions for proper setting.



◆ **Tip:** When baking time is up, insert a toothpick into the center of the muffin. If the toothpick comes out clean, they are done. If not, continue baking in 2 to 3 minute increments, checking each time with the toothpick until it comes out clean.

◆ **Tip:** When muffins are done, remove them at once from the muffin tins so they don't steam and soften. If they must stand in muffin tins, tip each one slightly in its cup so steam can evaporate.

## Storage

◆ Leftovers may be stored at room temperature, in a resealable plastic bag or an airtight container to retain moisture. Reheat and use within a day or so.

◆ Nut and fruit muffins are at their best if made the day before using. They should be cooled completely, wrapped tightly, and kept at room temperature.

◆ To freeze muffins, wrap in foil, heavy-duty plastic wrap or freezer-wrap and press all the air from package; freeze for up to 3 months.

◆ To thaw, let stand, wrapped, at room temperature for about 1½ hours.

## Troubleshooting

◆ **Tops are peaked and not rounded:** Muffins were baked too long or at too high a temperature.

◆ **Muffin is excessively shrunken or dry:** Too little batter was placed in the tin; or, muffins were baked too long or at too high a temperature.

◆ **Muffin texture (inside grain) has tunnels:** Batter was over-mixed. In addition, oven or batter temperature may have been too high.

◆ **Texture is soggy:** Batter was over-mixed or muffin was under-baked.

◆ **Tops are flat and smooth:** Oven temperature was too low; not enough batter was placed in the tin; or muffins were baked in paper liners.

◆ **Crust is too light:** Muffins have been under-baked or baked at too low a temperature.



## Recipes

### Low-Fat Bran Muffins

1½ cups	bran bud cereal
1 ⅓ cups	skim milk
1	egg
2 tablespoons	vegetable oil
1¼ cups	all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon	baking powder
½ teaspoon	salt
¼ cup	sugar
½ cup	raisins

Mix cereal and milk; let stand 5 minutes. Add egg and vegetable oil and beat well. Add flour, baking powder, salt, sugar and raisins. Mix until dry ingredients are moistened. Grease bottom of muffin tins and fill full with batter. Bake at 400°F for 20 to 25 minutes. Loosen from tins and let cool. Makes 12 muffins (12 servings).

**Nutrient Analysis:** One serving provides approximately: 143 calories, 4 g protein, 28 g carbohydrates, 5 g dietary fiber, 3 g fat (1 g saturated), 16 mg cholesterol, 61 mcg folate, 3 mg iron, 67 mg calcium, 289 mg potassium and 278 mg sodium.

### Variations of the above recipe:

Surprise Muffins: Fill muffin cups only ½ full; drop 1 teaspoon of your favorite jelly in the center of each and add batter to fill cups ⅔ full.

Blueberry Muffins: Fold 1 cup of fresh blueberries or ¾ cup of well-drained frozen blueberries (thawed) into batter.

Cranberry-Orange Muffins: Fold 1 tablespoon grated orange peel and 1 cup cranberries, cut in half, into batter.

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