

Additional Instructions - Both Recipes

Smaller Muffins - Both Recipes:

Portion into 16 or 18 muffins rather than 12. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, but don't be too concerned about browning on the top. With the smaller muffins there is a greater risk of drying with increased browning. Check with a toothpick and remove from oven when it comes out with just a few adhering.

Refrigerate or Freeze - Both Recipes:

Note: Batter can be made ahead of time and stored in either the fridge or the freezer. For the fridge, store it in a covered container up to 24 hours. For the freezer, portion the batter into the muffin tin and place tin in freezer to flash-freeze. Once frozen, remove from tin and store in a freezer container. To bake, return to muffin tin and let sit 30 minutes while preheating the oven. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes. (I generally use a muffin cup liner when freezing.)

Variations & Mix-Ins - Both Recipes:

Because some of these variations add to the volume of the batter, if you're making smaller muffins, you may be able to squeeze an extra muffin out of the batter. With the ginourmous muffins, well, they'll just be a bit larger. Watch the baking times as it may slightly affect the muffins.

While you may want to try any of these variations by themselves, feel free to riff and try in combinations - a huge number of variations can be made with different combinations of fillings, add-ins and toppings. The amounts given are only guidelines. Feel free to increase or decrease any of the options to suit your taste. The addition of too much fruit, chips, etc., can alter the texture of a muffin. Usually a cup to a cup and a half is about right to add flavor but not overwhelm.

Toppings:

- Sugar Coated:** Sprinkle the tops with 1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar or sanding sugar before baking.

•**Streusel Topping:** ½ c white or brown sugar, ⅓ c all purpose flour, ¼ c butter, cold & cubed, 1/2 to 1¾ tsp cinnamon, apple pie spice, or other flavoring. Mix together until crumbly.

•**Streusel Topping with Oatmeal or Nuts or Toffee Chips:** ½ c white or brown sugar, 1/4 c all purpose flour, ¼ c butter, cold & cubed, 1/2 to 1¾ tsp cinnamon, apple pie spice, or other flavoring. Mix together until crumbly. Use about 1/3 cup of oatmeal, finely chopped nuts or toffee chips.

•**Cinnamon Coated:** Mix about 1/2 cup of sugar with two teaspoons cinnamon. Dip warm muffin in melted butter and then in the cinnamon sugar mixture.

•**Citrus Glaze:** Mix 1/4 cup of sugar and 1/4 cup of citrus, simmer in a small saucepan for three minutes until slightly reduced. Brush on top of still warm muffins.

•**Chocolate Drizzle:** Any drizzle can be made by combining one ounce of chocolate with one teaspoon of shortening or butter. Shortening tends to give the best texture.

Fillings:

•**Berry:** Almost any berry is wonderful in these muffins. Larger berries like strawberry should be chopped. The trick to getting the berries to distribute evenly and not bleed too much into the batter is to gently shake them in a bit of flour, then shake off the excess before adding them to the batter. Sprinkle them across the top of the batter and gently fold in. Do not thaw if using frozen berries. No need to be exact, but don't over do it - usually 1 1/2 cups is more than sufficient.

•**Berry Plus Citrus:** Some berries just go well with other flavors. Add one teaspoon and up to one tablespoon of citrus zest to the yogurt. Gently fold into the batter 1 ½ cups fresh or frozen berries (do not thaw if frozen).

•**Lemon Blueberry (or Raspberry) Muffins:** Add 1 teaspoon grated fresh lemon zest to the yogurt mixture. Gently fold into the batter 1 ½ cups fresh or frozen berries (do not thaw if frozen).

•**Berry Plus Extract:** Add in about a 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon of your favorite extract with the yogurt. Some extracts are very strong and very little is needed. Almond comes to mind. Others are a little less overwhelming and the full 1/2 teaspoon will be needed. Gently fold into the batter 1 ½ cups fresh or frozen berries (do not thaw if frozen).

•**Lemon Poppy Seed Muffins:** Add 3 tablespoons poppy seeds to the flour mixture and 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest to the yogurt mixture. While the muffins bake, cook ¼ cup sugar and ¼ cup lemon juice in a small saucepan over medium heat until it turns into a light syrup, about 3 minutes. Brush the warm syrup over the warm baked muffins and serve.

•**Apple Pecan:** Finely dice two apples and fold into finished batter with 1/2 to one cup of chopped toasted pecans. Substitute all or part of the white sugar with brown, if desired. Try a little maple syrup mixed with melted butter for a topping. Also very good with a streusel topping.

•**Peach Pecan:** Finely dice two peaches and fold into finished batter with 1/2 to one cup of chopped toasted pecans. Substitute all or part of the white sugar with brown, if desired. Try a little maple syrup mixed with melted butter for a topping. Also very good with a streusel topping.

•**Apple & Cinnamon Chip:** Finely dice two medium apples, substitute some of the white sugar (or all) with brown sugar, add about 3/4 cup of cinnamon chips. My preferred topping is brown sugar streusel.

•**Apricot Almond:** Add three tablespoons almond paste with yogurt and mix in 1 1/2 cups finely chopped dried apricots. (Use a thin knife coated with cooking spray to finely chop Apricots. Freshly dried works best, here, ones that have been sitting for some time may be rather tough, although they can be softened by pouring a little boiling water over them and allowing to steep to desired consistency. Sprinkle a few sliced almonds over the muffins before baking.

•**Jelly or Jam Muffins:** Add three tablespoons almond paste to a small amount of the yogurt, mashing it into a cream. Mix with the remaining yogurt. Fill muffin tins halfway, add a heaping teaspoon of jam, then continue to fill them with the desired amount of batter.

•**Raspberry Almond 1:** Add three tablespoons almond paste to a small amount of the yogurt, mashing it into a cream. Mix with the remaining yogurt. When filling muffin tins, Spoon 2 tablespoons of the batter into each muffin cup. Drop 1 teaspoon raspberry jam into each cup, then spoon the remaining batter evenly on top.

•**Raspberry Almond 2:** Add ½ teaspoon almond extract to the yogurt mixture. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the batter into each muffin cup. Drop 1 teaspoon raspberry jam into each cup, then spoon the remaining batter evenly on top.

•**Raspberry Almond 3:** Add fresh raspberries and small chunks of almond paste (three to four tablespoons worth, broken into the size of chocolate chips) to the finished batter. Fold very gently.

•**Raspberry White Chocolate:** Fold in 1 1/2 cups of raspberries and 3/4 cups of white chocolate chips to the finished batter. Do not thaw if using frozen berries.

•**Cranberry Orange Muffins with or without Nuts:**

Add 1 teaspoon grated fresh orange zest to the yogurt mixture. Fold 1 ½ cups coarsely chopped fresh or frozen cranberries. If desired, add ¾ cup coarsely chopped toasted nuts into the batter.

•**Toffee Crunch:** Add one cup (or more!) of toffee chips to batter. Use all white sugar, all brown or a combination. Marvelous with the chocolate coated toffee chips or combined with 3/4 cup chocolate chips.

•**Toffee Crunch Almond:** Add a cup each of toffee chips and slivered almonds to finished batter. Like above, this can be made with any combination of brown and/or white sugar. Marvelous with the chocolate coated toffee chips, too.

•**Mocha Chip:** Dissolve three teaspoons instant espresso powder in yogurt and fold in one cup of chocolate chips into the finished batter.

•**Chocolate Chip Muffins:** Add 1 teaspoon vanilla to the yogurt mixture and fold 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips into the batter.

•**Banana or Banana Rum:** It's just hard to go wrong! For Banana, add 1/2 teaspoon of grated nutmeg in the dry ingredients and 1 1/2 cups of diced firm banana, folded into the finished batter. For Banana Rum, use 1/2 teaspoon Rum Extract mixed in the yogurt and then fold in the banana.

•**Banana Banana Chocolate Chip:** Fold 1½ cups finely diced bananas and 3/4 cup chocolate chips into the batter.

•**Banana Walnut Muffins:** Substitute light brown sugar for the granulated sugar and add ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg to the flour mixture. Fold 1 ½ cups finely diced bananas and ½ cup coarsely chopped toasted walnuts into the batter.

•**Other ideas:** I have yet to try every flavor combination I've thought of, and am always thinking of more, usually while I'm eating the ones I've just baked. Here's a few I hope to make friends with sometime in the future: Cherry, Cherry Almond, Cherry filled, Cream Cheese Cherry filled, Cream Cheese Chocolate Chip filled. Pineapple Coconut, Mango, Tropical Combinations, with perhaps a coconut topping, or grated lime zest, or a lime citrus glaze.