

Bake Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins

These lightly sweet muffins made with pureed pumpkin and chocolate chips are a delicious fall treat. These are dense muffins, reminiscent of pumpkin bread, and are delightful topped with orange cream cheese frosting. They're a cinch to make, and they'll give your kids a little extra math practice, without the moans and groans.

For an extra kick of fiber, try adding a tablespoon or two of ground flax meal. Your muffins will be slightly thicker, but they'll taste just as good.

What You Need:

- ½ cup golden brown sugar
- ½ cup organic applesauce
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 10-ounce can organic pumpkin puree
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup chocolate chips

For the Orange Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 1 ½ cups confectioner's sugar, sifted
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons orange juice
- 4 drops red food coloring
- 1 drop yellow food coloring

What You Do:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the brown sugar, applesauce, eggs, and pumpkin puree. Set aside.
3. Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl and whisk with the pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and chocolate chips.
4. Slowly pour the pumpkin mixture into the dry ingredients and stir, using slow, deliberate strokes with a wooden spoon or spatula. Do this just until you don't see any flour. Be careful not to over-stir, or you will end up with muffins that are rubbery and tough.
5. Portion the batter into a greased muffin tin (grease with nonstick cooking spray instead of butter, oil, or shortening for a healthier muffin), filling each cup about halfway. The easiest way to do this is to use a large spoon with the help of a smaller spoon to drop the batter where you want it.
6. Bake for 18-20 minutes or until the muffins bounce back to the touch and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. While the muffins are baking, follow steps 7-11 to prepare the cream cheese frosting.
7. In a small bowl, sift the powdered sugar through a sieve to remove lumps. Set aside.
8. In a medium mixing bowl, cream the butter and cream cheese together with an electric mixer. Start on the slowest setting, then gradually increase the speed until you get a smooth and creamy consistency.
9. Stir in the orange juice and vanilla.
10. Drop in the food coloring and stir until the frosting is a nice, even shade of orange.
11. When the muffins are done, remove them to a cooling rack and let cool 5 minutes in the tray, then remove the muffins to the rack. Allow the muffins to cool completely before frosting.
12. Spread the frosting on the muffins with a spreader, or pipe it on using a plastic zip-top bag. To pipe, spoon the frosting into a quart-sized bag and snip off the bottom corner.

Decorate the muffins any way you wish: with sprinkles, a thin twist of orange rind, or nothing at all!

**This recipe is peanut free, tree nut free, and vegetarian.

