

Bran Muffins

MAKES 12 MUFFINS

TIME: 45 MINUTES

(INCLUDES ABOUT 35 MINUTES
BAKING AND COOLING TIME)

Bran muffins overbake in a flash. Muffins are baked through when they retract ever so slightly from the sides of the cups and the tops spring back very gently when touched (don't look for an active spring). The muffins are baked through even though a wooden toothpick withdraws from the center with a few moist crumbs clinging to it. For raisin bran muffins, add 1 cup raisins to the dry ingredients. You can also flavor these muffins with 1 cup dried cherries, dried cranberries, chopped dried apricots, or chopped prunes or 1/3 cup chopped crystallized ginger.

- 1 1/2 cups (7 1/2 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups wheat bran
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup packed (3 1/2 ounces) dark brown sugar
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly

1. Adjust an oven rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 375 degrees. Spray a standard muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray.

2. Whisk together the flour, bran, baking powder, baking soda, allspice, and salt in a medium bowl until combined. Whisk together the eggs, brown sugar, and buttermilk in a large bowl until combined. Add the melted butter and whisk vigorously until thick and homogeneous. Whisk in half of the dry ingredients

until the two begin to come together and then add the remaining dry ingredients and stir with a rubber spatula or wooden spoon until just combined (do not overmix).

3. Use an ice cream scoop or a large spoon to drop batter into the greased muffin tin. Bake until golden and a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out with just a few moist crumbs, 22 to 25 minutes, rotating the pan from front to back halfway through the baking time. Cool the muffins in the tin for 5 minutes and then transfer them to a wire rack and cool for 10 more minutes. Serve warm.

GINGERBREAD MUFFINS

WE LOVE TRADITIONAL GINGERBREAD, but it does take a long time to bake—upward of 45 minutes even when prepared in a small square baking pan. We wanted to develop a shorter method for creating delicious, pleasantly spicy gingerbread, so we decided to use a muffin tin instead.

To carry out our experiments, we needed a basic recipe. We could follow one of two routes: water-based gingerbread recipes or milk-based ones. After testing both, we chose a milk-based recipe because it tasted richer and baked up moister.

We next concentrated on finding the best type and blend of sweeteners. We tested gingerbread made with granulated sugar, light and dark brown sugar, honey, three types of molasses (light, dark, and blackstrap), corn syrup, and even maple syrup. At first, we thought molasses was an essential ingredient because tasters liked the combination of light molasses and granulated sugar. After more testing, we realized this combination is essential but these ingredients are not. For ease and speed, we chose to use just dark brown sugar, which is white sugar mixed with molasses