



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

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Muffins have been popular for years, but Hannah Glasse -- author of a 1747 American cookbook -- would never recognize them today. Hannah's muffins were dry and plain, with a baking powdery taste. They baked for 25 minutes in a 400 degree oven. Today's muffins are moist with a natural sweetness from fruits and nuts. They micro-cook in about four minutes. Microwave muffins can be made in small custard cups, with or without a paper cupcake liner. But for convenience, a microwave muffin pan is best. Most pans are round with six muffin cups arranged in a circle. In some brands, muffin cups have holes in the bottom, to allow excess moisture to escape after cooking. With these, muffins can cool in the pan. Muffin cups without holes should be lined with two cupcake papers to help absorb excess moisture; or after two minutes standing time, muffins should be removed from the cups. Fill cups half to two-thirds full depending on the recipe. If cups are fuller, muffin batter cooks over the sides. With a thick batter containing a large amount of fruit and moist ingredients, like **Minnesota Muffins** (below), fill cups two-thirds full. With a thinner batter, like **Pumpkin Apple Muffins** (below), fill cups only half full.

Most microwave muffins need a bit of added color on top. Before microwaving, sprinkle with any of the **Muffin Toppings** below or with finely chopped nuts. The plain **Sugar-Cinnamon Topping** when sprinkled on both before and after microwaving makes an attractive almost-glazed topping. **Wheat Germ Topping** is a good choice if you're trying to eat less sugar.

Microwave muffins on High. Time varies according to the recipe and to your microwave's wattage. Generally, cooking time for six muffins is 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 minutes in a 625 to 725 watt microwave. Figure about half that time for two or three muffins. For a lower wattage microwave oven, time for six muffins is about 2 to 3 1/2 minutes.

Muffins are done when the tops just barely lose their moist look. With a muffin like **Minnesota Muffins** (below), pieces of fruit on top may still be slightly moist when removed from the microwave. Muffins continue to cook for a minute or two after microwaving, so allow for that. Experiment with the first panful, cooking the least amount of time.

If you have a favorite conventional muffin recipe, it may or may not adapt well to microwave cooking. Not all conventional muffin recipes are the best when microwaved -- some are dry tasting, even if they aren't cooked too long. Some have a very light cake-like texture, or a pastry or undone taste. But whenever you bake muffins, try two or three in your microwave. If they're good, you can save time and keep cool next time by microwaving the whole batch.

Minnesota Muffins
2 cups grated carrots

1/2 cup grated unpeeled apples
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1/2 cup grated or flaked coconut
1/2 cup raisins (chop, if desired)
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 cup bran cereal
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup margarine or butter
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
3 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
Muffin Topping (below)

Mix together carrots, apples, nuts, coconut and raisins; set aside. On waxed paper or in separate bowl, stir together flours, bran cereal, baking powder, cinnamon and salt; set aside. Melt margarine in microwave-safe mixing bowl; stir in brown sugar, eggs and vanilla until smooth. Stir in flour mixture until well mixed. Stir in fruit mixture, mixing well; do not beat.

Prepare microwave muffin pan by lining each cup with a paper baking cup. Fill each cup about 3/4 full. Sprinkle top of each muffin generously with a topping (below). For each panful of 6 muffins, microwave (High) 2 to 2 1/2 minutes, rotating 1/2 turn, if necessary, after 1 minute. Cool about 2 minutes before removing from cups. Repeat with remaining batter. Serve warm. Makes about 22 muffins.

Each muffin: 172 calories, 3g protein, 10g fat, 20g carbohydrate, 101mg sodium, 32mg cholesterol.

Pumpkin Apple Muffins
1/2 cup sugar
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup oil
2 eggs
3/4 cup cooked mashed pumpkin
1/2 cup finely chopped unpeeled apples

1/2 cup raisins (chop, if desired)
1/2 cup chopped nuts
Muffin Topping (below)
In mixing bowl, combine all dry ingredients; mix well. Make a well in center of dry ingredients. Add oil, eggs and pumpkin; mix until ingredients are just combined. Gently stir in apples, raisins and nuts; mixing until just combined.

Prepare microwave muffin pan by lining each cup with a paper baking cup. Fill each cup about 3/4 full. Sprinkle top of each muffin generously with a topping (below). For each panful of 6 muffins, microwave (High) 1 1/2 to 2 1/4 minutes, rotating 1/2 turn, if necessary, after 1 minute. Cool about 2 minutes before removing from cups. Repeat with remaining batter. Serve warm. Makes about 18 muffins.

Each muffin: 139 calories, 3g protein, 8g fat, 17g carbohydrate, 120mg sodium, 33mg cholesterol.
Muffin Toppings
Sugar-Cinnamon Topping: Stir together 2 tablespoons granulated sugar and 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon. Sprinkle on muffins, coffeecakes and quick breads

before and immediately after microwaving. Store any leftover mixture in tightly covered jar.
Brown Sugar Topping: Stir together 1/4 cup packed dark (or light) brown sugar and 1/2 tea-

spoons ground cinnamon. Use as above.
Wheat Germ Topping: Stir together 1/4 cup wheat germ and 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon. Use as above, but store leftover mixture in refrigerator.

Joyce Battcher is an independent home economist specialist. She is author of "Microwave Family Favorites" and editor of "A Batch of Ideas" newsletter. ©1988 Extra Newspaper Features

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