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Apple 'n Blueberry Flaxseed Muffins

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES • Janice Feuer-Haugen

Each time I bite into an Apple 'n Blueberry Flaxseed Muffin I'm surprised all over again by their full flavor and light, moist and tender texture. And then I wonder why I don't make these delicious fruit-studded muffins more often. They're perfect in the lunch box, as an afternoon snack, and of course, for breakfast. Nutritionally rich, dairy and gluten-free, these muffins are chockfull of healthful ingredients, including coconut sugar, oat flour, flaxseeds and blueberries.

BLUEBERRIES

One of the few fruits native to North America, blueberries are very low in calories, and high in nutrition. These nutritional all-stars range in flavor from the mildly sweet commercially raised blueberries to the tart and tangy wild blueberries. Whenever possible buy organic blueberries to both maximize their nutritional benefits and to avoid the high level of pesticide residue unfortunately found in non-organic berries.

Blueberries have one of the highest antioxidant capacities and widest variety of antioxidants among fruits and vegetables in the U.S. The benefits of antioxidants include cardiovascular system protection, eye health support, memory improvement and blood sugar regulation.

OAT FLOUR

The first time I ever baked with oat flour was making these Apple 'n Blueberry Flaxseed Muffins. My first bite was a revelation. The texture seemed lighter, moister and more tender than muffins made with wheat flour. Plus, oat flour adds protein, iron, thiamine, and fiber while lowering cholesterol and supporting the heart.

Oat flour takes seconds to make at home. Just process rolled oats in a blender until they reach the consistency of flour. Or, if you'd rather, you can purchase oat flour in many natural foods markets. Oat flour is often used in gluten-free baking as oats do not contain gluten. However, rolled oats and oat flour are often processed in facilities which handle grains containing gluten. So, if you are very sensitive to gluten, don't shop the bulk bins. Instead, purchase rolled oats or oat flour in sealed packages specifically labeled as gluten-free.



FLAXSEEDS

Like oat flour, flaxseeds take just seconds to grind in a blender. Flaxseeds provide a nut-like crunch along with a unique combination of health benefits from their Omega-3 fatty acids and lignans. Plus their high mucilage content helps these gluten-free muffins hold together better.

COCONUT SUGAR

Similar in taste to brown sugar, coconut sugar has a high mineral and B vitamin content. Healthier than refined white or brown sugar, coconut sugar has 36 times the iron, four times the magnesium, and over 10 times the amount of zinc. In addition, the coconut sap from which coconut sugar is derived, contains 16 amino acids. Use coconut sugar as a 1:1 sugar substitute in baking and cooking.

ONE IS NOT ENOUGH!

Filled with so many healthful ingredients, Apple 'n Blueberry Flaxseed Muffins are more than just good enough to eat; they're also good for you. And, if you're like me, one is definitely not enough.

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Apple 'n Blueberry Flaxseed Muffins

Makes 12 muffins
Active time: 25 minutes
Total time: 1 hour

- ½ cup coconut sugar
- 4 teaspoons molasses
- 3 large eggs
- 1¼ cups lite coconut milk (from the can)
- 1/3 cup melted coconut oil or extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons ground flaxseeds (finely ground from ¾ cup whole flaxseeds)
- 1 1/3 cup oat flour (made in a blender from a scant 1 1/3 cups rolled oats)
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- Rounded 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Rounded ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 tart red apple, cored and cut into ¼-inch dice (preferably organic)
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries (preferably organic)

1) Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a standard-size muffin tin with paper liners or lightly coat with coconut oil spray.

2) In a small mixing bowl combine the coconut sugar, molasses, eggs, coconut milk and oil. Stir in the ground flaxseeds. Set this mixture aside while you prepare the other ingredients.

3) In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the oat flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients.



4) Pour the flaxseed mixture into the well. Gently fold it into the dry ingredients. When two-thirds mixed, stir in the diced apple and fresh (or still frozen) blueberries until just combined.

5) Fill each muffin cup with a scant ½ cup of the batter.

6) Bake for 25 minutes. Rotate the pan 180 degrees. Bake for another 10 minutes. Insert a toothpick into the center of a couple of muffins. If the toothpick comes out clean, the muffins are done. If not, bake for another 5 minutes and test again.

7) Remove the muffins from the oven. Let the muffins cool for about 5 minutes before removing them from the pan.

Enjoy Apple 'n Blueberry Flaxseed Muffins warm; although you may find them even more flavorful at room temperature. ■

(Inspired by and adapted from a recipe from Elisabeth Prueitt of San Francisco's Tartine Bakery.)

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