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## A Time of Comfort... Blueberry BranAppleNut Muffins

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES

Janice Feuer-Haugen

It was bound to happen—I would eventually share with you my absolute favorite muffin recipe, which I have been enjoying in all of its many permutations for over 20 years—**Blueberry BranAppleNut Muffins!** After all the activity of December, the winter months offer a time of comfort, of contemplation, and of concentration on fulfilling our New Year's resolution to eat more healthily with more whole grains and locally grown foods, while reducing our intake of fat and highly refined sugars and flour.

Consumed for more than 12,000 years, wheat is the world's most important cereal grain. Wheat is also the dominant crop in Montana agriculture, accounting for 65% of the income from all Montana crops. Known for its exceptional high protein content, wheat from Montana is exported around the world to countries demanding high-quality wheat, such as Italy for its pasta, and Taiwan and Japan for their noodles.

To benefit from the nutritional density of wheat, enjoy it as wheat berries or as whole-wheat flour so that the bran and the germ of the wheat are still present. In this way, wheat is a good source of dietary fiber, manganese and magnesium, as well as other vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Each berry of wheat consists of three main parts, with bran being the outer covering and consisting of high-quality protein and other nutrients. The germ in the center is one of the eight richest sources of B and E vitamins, and contains protein, high quality fat and calcium. The rest of the wheat berry, the endosperm, from which white flour is principally milled, is high in cellulose with few other nutritional benefits on its own.

Blueberry BranAppleNut Muffins will assist us greatly in maintaining our healthy promise to ourselves throughout the year, as these muffins are made from whole-wheat flour, whole-wheat pastry flour and additional bran. With just the right amount of sweetness from the blueberries, apple, molasses, and apple butter, Blueberry BranAppleNut Muffins offer comfort, taste and good nutrition all at once.

To your health! —Janice

### Blueberry BranAppleNut Muffins

Yield: 12 large muffins

- 3/4 cup pecans or walnuts
- 1 apple cut into 1 / 4 inch dice
- 1 1/4 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1 rounded teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 3/4 cups bran
- 1 1/4 cup vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup milk or alternative, such as grain milk
- 1/2 cup blackstrap molasses
- 1/4 cup apple butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 1/2 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

Preheat the oven to 375°. Lightly spray a muffin tin with oil. Toast the pecans or walnuts for approximately 7 minutes. Remove from the oven and very coarsely chop. Cut the apple into 1/4" dice. In a large bowl, sift together the whole wheat flours, baking soda, cinnamon and salt; then stir in the bran. Using a rubber spatula create a large well in the center of these dry ingredients.

Separately whisk together the yogurt, milk or milk alternative, molasses, apple butter and the eggs. Stir the melted butter into the wet ingredients just before you pour them into the well you created in the dry ingredients. Use your rubber spatula to combine the two mixtures. When two-thirds combined, add the blueberries, toasted nuts and diced apple. Mix together leaving the mixture quite lumpy; it will also be quite thick. Use an ice cream scoop or measuring cup to pile the muffin mix into the prepared muffin tin.

Place the muffins on the middle shelf in the preheated oven. Turn the pan 180 degrees after they have baked for 15 minutes. Bake them for another 12–15 minutes, or until you can insert a toothpick in the middle of a muffin and it comes out clean without moist dough clinging to it.

Let the muffins cool a few minutes in the pan before removing them and they will come out much more easily.

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