

Substack Newsletter—SN8

Pumpkin Ginger Muffins

“When the frost is on the punkin.....” Thinkin about Punkins. My ode to Pumpkins.

10/10/23

A favorite poem of my father’s:

But the air’s so appetizin;’ and the landscape through the haze

Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days

Is a pictur’ that no painter has the colorin’ to mock—

When the frost is on the punkin and the foddors in the shock.

—James Whitcomb Riley



The color of a pumpkin burnished with the brown hues of warm autumn spices and covered with a smattering of frost.

What am I thinking about? When pumpkin season rolls around, it reminds me of so many things. Things from long ago, like my father going around parroting James Whitcomb Riley's famous poem and, at the same time, wishing I had a Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Latte right now. I do miss my father when the leaves in the pumpkin patch are gone and the beautiful pumpkins are revealed. Yes, I did say "beautiful," which is exactly how I feel about pumpkins.

At this time of the year, I also miss New England, where I lived for twenty-five years, and where the frost will literally be on the pumpkins any day now, if not already. I remember what the village of Lenox, MA, where I lived, looked like on a cool sunny September day when all the stores in town were all decked out with their colorful displays of fall finery: hay bales, purple

cabbages, gourds with their zany stripes of gold, green, and cream, and a plethora of pumpkins in an abundant assortment of colors and shapes.

My husband and I used to drive up to Vermont in the fall, becoming “leaf peepers,” like so many others. In addition to the gorgeous array of autumn leaves, I think about the pumpkin fields in Vermont, with the giant orange jack-o’-lantern pumpkins laying on the ground reaching toward the horizon. When pumpkins are ready, the leaves begin to turn all different shades of orange, red, yellow, and burgundy. It is a sight not to be missed. Oh, to be in New England in September and October!

And I think about that little coffee shop on the corner when I lived in Boston for a time. I could never walk by that corner without buying a muffin. They were so close to perfect: nicely domed with a moist crumb that held together and wasn’t crumbly, just the right amount of warm autumn spices, and studded with chunks of crystallized ginger. Also, I can’t forget that stunning brownish orange pumpkin-y color. I still think about those muffins all these years later. They were always on my shoulder, guiding me, when I was creating this recipe.

Oh, and I remember the way our bakery smelled in the fall, with a scented *mélange* of warm spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and cloves wafting through the air, as a huge batch of pumpkin muffins baked in our big convection oven for morning breakfast. It’s an aroma like no other. And through the window of the kitchen and the back door you could see the colorful leaves swirling about in the wind. The blowing leaves would follow me all the way home, where almost every house would have pumpkins arranged on their porch or front steps. Now and then, the late afternoon sun would burst through the trees like a spotlight and make the colors of the leaves even more vibrant. Unforgettable.

RECIPE:

Pumpkin Ginger Muffins

AUTHOR: Shirl Gard

These are muffins with a deep autumn color, almost as dark as gingerbread, but with an orange-y pumpkin hue. They are moist and dense with lots of spices and chunks of candied ginger.

YIELD: 14 X-LARGE MUFFINS - 135g (4.75 oz) EACH

OR: 24 STANDARD-SIZE MUFFINS - 75g (2.5 oz) EACH

INGREDIENTS

LIQUID:

425 grams Libby's 100% pure pumpkin - 1 (15-oz) can

300 grams light brown sugar (1½ cups packed)

100 grams unsalted butter, melted (7 tablespoons)

100 grams canola oil (1/2 cup)

200 grams whole eggs (4 large)

120 grams buttermilk (1/2 cup)

DRY:

500 grams unbleached all-purpose flour (3½ cups)

10 grams baking powder (2 teaspoons)

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

2½ teaspoons Viet Nam cinnamon

2 teaspoons Korintje cinnamon

4½ teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon grated nutmeg

½ teaspoon ground cloves

ADD-INS:

170 grams diced crystallized ginger - cut in ¼"- 3/8" dice (1 cup)

1925 grams = Total 68 oz (4# 4 oz)

TOPPING:

For a "Frosted" look, use Sparkling sugar or Sanding Sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **MIXING METHOD:** Muffin Method - Liquid + Dry
2. **PRE-HEAT OVEN TO 450°F.**
3. **SET UP MUFFIN PANS:** For X-Large Muffins: Use one 12-cup standard muffin pan and one 6-cup muffin pan lined with 6" diameter (jumbo) paper liners. For Standard-Size Muffins: Use 2 - 12-cup standard-size muffin pans, lined with standard muffin papers (4

1/2" diameter). Set the muffin pans on sheet pans, which will prevent the bottoms from getting too dark.

4. **TO MIX:** WHISK LIQUID INGREDIENTS together in a large bowl until smooth.
5. WHISK DRY INGREDIENTS together in an extra-large bowl until well-mixed and aerated.
6. ADD liquid mix to dry and fold in with a rubber spatula until half mixed.
7. SCATTER the crystallized ginger over the batter and finish folding until all the flour is absorbed.
8. SPRAY the paper liners with non-stick spray (with flour) and scoop batter into the cups, using a #8 Gray portion scoop - level (1/2 cup) .
9. **TOPPING:** Sprinkle tops generously with Turbinado or Sparkling sugar.
10. **TO BAKE:** Turn oven down to 425°F when the muffins go in and bake for 15 minutes.
11. ROTATE pan and turn oven down to 400°F to finish baking; another 14-15 minutes.
Total baking time: 29-30 minutes or until a wooden skewer comes out clean.
12. INTERNAL TEMPERATURE = 209° to 210° F, if using a thermometer.
13. **COOL:** Let the muffins cool for 5-10 minutes in the pan, then transfer to a cooling rack.

Recipe Ancestry Notes:

To develop this recipe, I started with one from the *Nantucket Open-House Cookbook* by Sarah Leah Chase (1987). I made a few changes to the original recipe, primarily to make the muffins moister: by using half butter / half canola oil instead of all margarine and by using buttermilk instead of apple cider. Following my "less is more" motto when it comes to leavening, I cut back on the baking soda. Also, since older recipes tend to have too much sugar, I used less sugar. Since I like to weigh all my ingredients when baking, I converted everything to metric weights, in addition to cups and spoons.

For an easy-to-print version, go to my website: shirlgard.com

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Re: Muffin Sizes:

Did you know that you can bake two different size muffins in a Standard Size Muffin Pan? Here's how. By using 2 different size paper liners and scoops.

X-Large:

This is the size muffin we used in our bake shop. These are a little more dramatic than the standard size. Here are the specs for this size: 1. Standard-Size Muffin Pan 2. 6" (15 cm) diameter muffin papers 3. Scoop Size #8 Gray portion scoop - 135g (1/2 cup). This size paper liner will be about 1/2" (12 mm) above the top of the pan. See the specs for Standard Size Muffins below the recipe.

X-Large Size.

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Standard Size:

These are the specs for this size: 1. Standard-Size Muffin pan 2. 4.5" (11 cm) diameter muffin papers. Standard muffin papers will come just to the top of the pan. 3. Scoop Size #16 Blue portion scoop - About 75g (1/4 cup).

Standard Size.

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Standard Size.

Please comment.....about anything you like. I would appreciate it. Until next time.