Veggie muffins

Sweetened only with fruit and dates, these healthy muffins are a great way to get kids (and yourself) to eat more vegetables.

Preheat oven 176 C (350 F)
(Ingredients underlined & highlighted in red)
In a large bowl, combine the following:

- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 medium apple or pear, chopped
- 2 cups chopped of three or more of the following: Carrots (purple, white, or orange), beets, broccoli, zucchini, cauliflower, asparagus, corn, spinach, kale, chard, or other favourite vegetable. You can use cooked or raw vegetables.
- ½ cup fresh or canned pumpkin, butternut squash, or other squash. If you use canned pumpkin, make sure it's *pure pumpkin* (read the label). Avoid the sugar-rich "pumpkin filling." You can freeze the rest of the can's ingredients to use next time or double the recipe.
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 egg beaten
- ***In a smaller bowl:*** 1/2 cup dates, each date cut in half. Heat the dates with 2 tablespoons of water in your microwave for about 30 seconds. Drain the liquid, then add to above ingredients.

Pulse and grind the above "wet" ingredients in a high-power blender or food processor. Avoid liquifying the ingredients too much. Less processing retains more nutrients and if the mixture is blended into a fine puree, you may need to add more flour to the batter. Incidentally, you don't need to use a blender or processor, if you have time to finely chop, grate or mash each ingredient.

In another large bowl, combine the "dry" ingredients:

- 1 cup flour Use your preference of any flour but spelt and wheat are 'lighter' allowing the muffins to rise, despite all the other 'heavy' ingredients!
- ½ cup quinoa flakes or quick-cooking oat flakes. Or omit the flakes and add ½ cup any flour.
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ***Optional:*** for a chocolate-tasting version, add 2 TB unsweetened cocoa powder

Combine wet into dry ingredients.

Lightly grease a muffin pan or use paper cupcake liners (or use a nonstick muffin pan). Bake for 25-30 minutes at 176 C (350 F). Makes approximately 12 muffins. Wait five minutes for the muffins to cool before removing them from the pan. When completely cooled, refrigerate for up to five days or freeze for longer. For mini muffins, bake for only 15 minutes (yields approx. 24-30 mini muffins).

NUTRITION TIPS: There are several vegetable and fruit options listed in the recipe above. Use different ingredients each time you make this recipe. It's so important to include a wide variety of foods in your diet, to benefit from the many different nutrients our foods offer. And as recent research shows, plant diversity also feeds the many types of "good" bacteria in our gut (our microbiome) to keep us healthy! Therefore, try to change the foods you eat at each meal every day, and that includes alternating the ingredients you use in these muffins.

IMPORTANT: *Sugar-free and additive-free baked goods must be stored in the refrigerator or freezer.*

Recipe designed Oct 2021 by Eve Lees www.artnews-healthnews.com