the great pumpkin

by Connie Tucker, a cook's journal blog

I'm getting nervous with all this talk about pumpkin shortages, aren't you? I don't know if I can take the stress, but I will admit, I stashed about six cans of pumpkin in my cupboard last fall. How come I was so psychic? I guess I'll muddle through and will still be able to make my mother's wonderful pie for the holidays. In the meantime, I'm making these great desserts. Step aside, Charlie Brown! I'm stalking the Great Pumpkin!

pumpkin pie cookies

These are a pumpkin version of thumbprint (jam-filled) cookies we all know and love, but with a giant twist. I don't normally buy white chocolate chips as they are so overprocessed, but they are essential to keeping the pumpkin filling from becoming too gooey or runny. Raw sugar is a coarse granule with a molasses-y flavor. All this comes together to become a totally unexpected fall treat.

ingredients

3/4 cup butter

1 cup brown sugar

1/2 cup white sugar

1 egg

1 or 2 tsp vanilla extract

1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt or softened cream cheese

2 Tbsp pumpkin (Steal from the can used for the filling)

2 3/4 cup flour

1 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp ginger

1/2 tsp allspice

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp baking soda

Domino Demerara raw sugar for rolling, available in the sugar aisle

filling

3/4 cup plain pumpkin puree (Libby's or One Pie), NOT pie filing

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 tsp cinnamon

3 Tbsp half-and- half
1/2 cup white chocolate chips, melted in a double boiler

directions

Preheat oven to 375°. Cream together butter and sugars. Once combined, mix in egg and vanilla. Beat for about 2 minutes, until completely smooth. Add in yogurt or cream cheese and pumpkin, mix for one minute. Sift together flour, spices, salt, baking soda, and baking powder. Slowly add into the wet mixture. Beat until combined. Refrigerate for 30 minutes or overnight if you need to.

Make the filling: whip together pumpkin puree, brown sugar, cinnamon, half-and-half, and the melted white chocolate chips. Taste and adjust if you like it sweeter. Roll cookies into a golf-ball-size, roll through raw sugar, than place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment. With your finger, press a small dent into the center of the dough. Fill with pumpkin pie filling mixture. Bake for 10 minutes, then let cool before serving. Makes about 2 ½ dozen cookies.

dark chocolate pumpkin spice muffins

These muffins have no oil or butter in them. The moisture comes from the applesauce. Amazing! Go stock up on canned pumpkin NOW! LOL
P.S. You will gain back all the calories the oil might rack up if you ice them with the cream cheese frosting. Oh, well!

ingredients

1 3/4 cup flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 1/2 cup sugar
3/4 tsp salt
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp ginger
1/4 tsp cloves
1/2 cup applesauce
2 eggs
1/3 cup water
1 1/4 cup plain pumpkin puree (Libby's or One Pie are best)
1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
Cinnamon sugar to sprinkle on top

directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix together flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, and spices. Once blended, add the remaining ingredients and mix until combined. Spoon batter into muffin tin liners about three-quarters- full. Let filled pan stand for about a half hour. Bake for about 22 minutes. Sprinkle with a bit of cinnamon sugar and serve! Makes 12 muffins. Top with cream cheese frosting.

cream cheese frosting

ingredients (can be halved)
2 pounds cream cheese, softened (1)
2 sticks unsalted butter, softened (1)
3 cups confectioners' sugar (1 ½)
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract (1)

directions

Sift all confectioner's sugar into a large bowl to eliminate lumps. Beat cream cheese, butter, and 1 cup sifted sugar with a mixer on medium-slow speed until combined. With machine running, add remaining 2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, 1/2 cup at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla, and beat until pale and fluffy, about 4 minutes more.

Cook's Note: Cream cheese frosting can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Bring to room temperature and beat before using.