

Pumpkin Muffins with pepita sugar

Yogurt, almond meal, and coconut oil join up in these supremely tender muffins. The shimmery topping is perfectly sweet, thanks to grinding some sugar with a handful of salted pepitas. I added a cup of whole wheat pastry flour to the batter to underpin the nutty flavors, but the overall impact -- of pumpkin, of spice, of coconut, of almond -- is delicate and well-balanced, more purring kitten than roaring lion.

Makes 12 muffins

For the muffins:

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup (lightly packed) almond meal
3/4 cup pure pumpkin puree
1/4 cup whole milk yogurt
1/2 cup melted coconut oil (measure after melting)
2 eggs
1/4 cup whole milk, or a touch more
1 teaspoon almond extract
2/3 cup granulated sugar

For the topping:

1/4 cup salted pepitas
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
3 tablespoons melted coconut oil

Preheat the oven to 400°F with a rack in the center. Fit a 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners.

Make the muffins. Into a large bowl, sift the two flours, pumpkin pie spice, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Add the almond meal and give everything a good fluff with your largest whisk. Make a well. Add the pumpkin, yogurt, coconut oil, eggs, milk, almond extract, and sugar. Whisk the ingredients in the center of the bowl, then slowly begin combining them with the dry ingredients. Swap the whisk for a large silicone spatula or wooden spoon to finish beating the ingredients, making sure no floury pockets hide at the bottom of the bowl. (The batter should be quite thick, but you can splash in a teaspoon or two of extra milk if needed.) Divide evenly among the muffin liners, filling each cup to the top. Bake 22-24 minutes, until the caps are nicely browned and crisp in spots and a skewer comes out clean.

Meanwhile, making the topping. In a spice grinder, combine the pepitas and sugar and grind until powdery. Transfer to a small bowl. Place the 3 tablespoons liquid coconut oil in a second small bowl.

Dip and cool. When the muffins are ready, transfer them to a rack. Working with one muffin at a time while they're still warm, invert each muffin, dipping first in coconut oil and then in the pepita sugar. (Swirl as you dip to coat the entire muffin cap.) Return to the rack to finish cooling. Repeat with remaining muffins. Store leftover muffins in foil, and split and toast the following day.