

Cinnamon Kabocha Muffins

This was really the first winter when I fell hard for squash. I used it in a [Thai-style soup with red curry and coconut](#), paired it with [wild rice, hazelnuts, and spinach in a colorful side](#), and folded the puree into these coppery, fiber-packed muffins with a strong whiff of cinnamon. Look for wheat bran at Whole Foods, any health food store, or many large grocery stores. I buy [the kind made by Bob's Red Mill](#). Please do not confuse wheat *germ* with wheat *bran*; they are not the same. Oh, these freeze beautifully and are 100% lunchbox-friendly.

Makes 12 muffins

1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup wheat bran
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon (I used Ceylon cinnamon)
2 eggs
1 cup dark brown sugar
1 cup + 2 tablespoons pureed squash**
1/2 cup canola oil
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
Coarse (demerara) sugar, for sprinkling, if desired

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Generously coat a 12-cup muffin tin with nonstick spray.

In a large bowl, whisk the dry ingredients together (flours through cinnamon).

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs. Then add the brown sugar, squash, oil, and vanilla and whisk until thoroughly combined.

Scrape the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir well with a rubber spatula. Use a folding motion to lift the batter up from the bottom to ensure that all the flour particles are completely absorbed.

Divide the batter evenly among the muffin cups and sprinkle the tops, if desired, with a little coarse sugar. Bake for about 24 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean. Cool for a few minutes in the cups, then turn out onto a wire rack to finish cooling.

*** To make squash puree: Take about 4 pounds of squash (2-3 kabochas, or substitute butternuts if you like). Quarter each squash and scrape out the seeds. Place the pieces face down (or on their sides) on a rimmed baking sheet and roast in a preheated 400 degree oven for about 55 minutes, or until very tender. Cool slightly, discard the peels, and puree the flesh in a food processor. Once completely cool, you can portion out the puree into ziplocs and freeze it for future use. (You'll have about 3-1/4 cups puree.)