# FROM THE CULINARY LIBERTARIAN:

# Foolproof Muffins

Recipes that Work Every Time



Dann Reid

# Foolproof Muffin Recipes that Work Every Time

Dann Reid The Culinary Libertarian

#### Copyright © 2019 Daniel Reid

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced mechanically, electronically, or by any other means, including photocopying, without written permission of the author. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission from the author.

Daniel Reid Culinary Libertarian Oregon

Limits of Liability and Disclaimer of Warranty
The author shall not be liable for your misuse of this
material. This book is strictly for informational and
educational purposes.

#### Warning – Disclaimer

The purpose of this book is to educate and inform. The author does not guarantee that anyone following these techniques, suggestions, tips, ideas, or strategies will become successful. The author shall have neither liability nor responsibility to anyone with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to be caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained in this book.

#### **Affiliate Disclaimer**

Transparency is important, so I am disclosing that I've included certain products and links to those products in this e-book. When you buy those products, I will earn an affiliate commission at no cost to you. My goal with this book is to help teach and share information on baking which is relevant to muffins and quick breads.

You may conclude that any links leading you to products or services are affiliate links, and I will receive a commission. There are more than a few food and cooking and ingredient sites, but I've picked these to share with you. Please note that I have not been given any free products, services or anything else by these companies in exchange for mentioning them on the site. The only consideration is in the form of affiliate commissions.

Also, we are a participant in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, an affiliate advertising program designed to provide a means for us to earn fees by linking to Amazon.com and affiliated sites.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact me here, dann@culinarylibertarian.com

# **Table Of Contents**

Introduction	4
Liquid may be hiding	6
On Ingredients	6
Substitutions	8
Farenheit to Celcius	9
Weight conversions	10
Muffin Ingredients	13
Safety	18
Sanitation	19
Tabula Rosa Muffin	20
Corn Muffin	22
Apple Pumpkin Muffin	24
Charlie Bread	26
Lemon Poppy seed Muffin	28
Carrot and Zucchini Muffin	31
Pumpkin Cream Cheese Muffin	33
Streusel Topping	36
Spices and Flavors	38
Utensils and Tools	40

#### Introduction

#### In the beginning, sorta

When I was 8 my dad baked a batch of muffins. I don't remember the flavor, but I do remember he did it. And for a while, he baked muffins frequently.

Only much later did I understand how easy muffins are, but they are not without some rules.

Muffins' most basic distinction from cakes is in the procedure used to mix them. All the wet in one bowl and the sifted dry in another.

There is a bit of science to this plan. Sugar, in this method, is a wet because it draws moisture. Also, in muffins, the butter is melted and added to the eggs and dairy. Then, mix: wet on top of dry and fold together.

Muffins are tricky treats. Too much folding and it becomes over-mixed, and that's not a good muffin. Where a cake is creamed and paddled much, a muffin is ee cummings: culinary minimalism. Only just enough, and no more.

#### The liquid might be hiding

Most of the muffins I make use buttermilk. I do that because I like how the muffin tastes with buttermilk.

The buttermilk is acidic, and it also makes the chemistry of acid and alkaline work.

Some recipes can use whole milk.

Some, the banana and the pumpkin, are less obvious. The puree itself is the liquid, along with the eggs and the sugar. And the fat. But, nothing pourable from a bottle, such as canola, corn, or soybean oil.

#### On ingredients

Not all butter is the same. The European butter, which often comes in 8 oz boxes instead of 16 oz, is higher in butterfat than the other butter. For the purposes of muffins, European butter is more than we need. The regular unsalted butter on sale this week is fine.

However, margarine is never ever okay. Do not use margarine. Also, do not use those previously mentioned vegetable oils. The so-called vegetable oils are from grains or seeds. Those oils oxidize rapidly, and that's a bad problem for the humans. For a detailed explanation, listen to the podcast episode I made with Kyle Mamounis, a bio chemist, culinarylibertarian.com/14.

I am brand name loyal for flour and baking soda and powder. I've used brands other those I prefer and have

found that for muffins and cakes, as long as the ingredients are fresh--not outside the use-by date--all is well.

#### **Substitutions**

Sometimes, we run out of things. Buttermilk can be hacked, and with adequate results, but doing so does sacrifice buttermilk flavor which is a big plus for baked goods. Yogurt or sour cream and milk do provide the acid needed for the leavening, but they produce a slightly more dense muffin.

1 tsp of lemon juice per cup of whole milk is a suitable replacement for buttermilk. The chemistry is much like the vinegar and baking soda experiment. Buttermilk is acidic and baking soda alkaline and together, they make bubbles, which in our muffin, is lift. Lemon juice is the acid to create the reaction, but lemon juice lacks the deep flavor buttermilk, also acidic, provides.

You can really test the alchemy waters and use ½ teaspoon of lemon juice to half a cup of milk and half a cup of plain yogurt, but the batter might be stiff. Yogurt doesn't have the moisture levels of buttermilk. Tweaking this much can produce results, but farther and farther from what is expected.

# Farenheit to Celcius

F°	C°
200°	93°
250°	121°
300°	149°
325°	163°
350°	176°
375°	191°
400°	205°
425°	218°

F°	C°
450°	232°
475°	246°
500°	260°
525°	273°
550°	288°
575°	302°
600°	332°

#### Weight Conversions from volume

We all find recipes which present the ingredients in cups and teaspoons and tablespoons.

#### Ugh!

Often enough, the basics can be converted with practice as they are a constant. A cup of sugar is 7 oz. With liquids such as water or milk or solids such as butter, a pint is a pound. That does not work for all things, but I've found that, in a pinch and with the small portions I make at home, the recipes with these conversions will work.

However, since I also discuss the importance of accuracy, here's a list of some frequently used ingredients and their ounce equivalents.

#### 1 Cup of

	OZ	g
- Unbleached All-Purpose Flour	4 1/4	120
- Bread Flour	4 1/4	130
- Italian-Style 00	3 3/4	106
- Self-Rising Flour	4	113
- Whole Wheat Flour (traditional)	4	113
- White Whole Wheat Flour	4	113
- Whole Wheat Pastry Flour	3 3/8	96

1 Cup of		OZ	g
Butter		8	227
Cream Cheese		8	227
Lard		8	227
1 Cup of			
		7	198
Sugar (granulated white) Sugar, confectioners' (unsifted)		4	113
Sugar, dark or light brown (packed)		7.5	213
	•		
Various ingredients			
	Volume	OZ	g
Almonds (sliced)	1/2 cup	1.5	43
Almonds (slivered)	1/2 cup	2	57
Almonds, whole	1 cup	5	142
Baking powder	1 t		4
Baking soda	1/2 t		3
Bananas (mashed)	1 cup	8	227
Berries (frozen)	1 cup	5	142
Blueberries (fresh)	1 cup	6	170
Buttermilk, sour cream	2 T	1	28
Cashews (chopped)	1 cup	4	113
Cashews (whole)	1 cup	4	113

Carrots (grated)	1 cup	3.5	116
Chocolate (chopped)	1 cup	6	170
Chocolate chips	1 cup	6	170
Cocoa, unsweetened	2 T	3/8	11
	1/4 cup	3/4	21
	1 cup	3	85
Honey	1 T	3/4	21
	1 cup	12	340
Oats, traditional	1 cup	3.5	99
Pumpkin (canned)	1 cup	9.5	269
Raisins (loose)	1 cup	5 1/4	149
Walnuts (whole)	1/2 cup	2 1/4	64
Walnuts (chopped)	1 cup	4	113
Yogurt	1 cup	8	227
Zucchini (shredded)	1 cup	5-6	125

## Muffin ingredients

Muffins are so easy to make, in part, because nearly everyone has the ingredients.

These items, where indicated, are my preferences. If you can't find a brand of flour or baking soda, but can buy another brand, that's okay. For muffins, all commercial products are of sufficient quality that they are interchangeable. Making the food is more important than the brand of ingredient.

**Baking powder** Baking powder is baking soda and a powder form of acid, often an aluminum phosphate or an aluminum sulfate. These kinds of baking powders are sometimes called double-acting. They give lift to the baked good when in contact with liquid and heat.

If you prefer aluminum-free baking powders, they are single-acting and that starts at the contact with liquids. Act urgently when using aluminum free baking powder.

**Baking soda** Sodium bicarbonate requires both acid and moisture to leaven a product. Quick breads made with baking soda almost always use buttermilk as the dairy for the higher acid content.

**Butter** Butter for baking should always be unsalted. Margarine should never be used. Butter quality varies from brand to brand, but in muffins and quick breads, the store brand or national brand may be about the same. The expensive European style butters have a higher butter fat percentage which is important for puff pastry and croissants. European butter might make a better muffin, but it may be hard to see the difference.

**Buttermilk** Buttermilk is a cultured dairy product. Cultured means a bacterial strain has been introduced, as in sour cream or yogurt. Most buttermilk is, despite its name, almost entirely butter free. Buttermilk's prime contribution is flavor and acid for the necessary reaction with baking soda for leavening baked goods.

**Cocoa** Cocoa powder is made by removing most of the fat from the fermented cocoa nibs and grinding the remaining cocoa nibs. The powder is unsweetened and does have a small portion of fat. The higher the fat content by percentage indicates a higher quality cocoa powder. Cocoa powder is also mildly acidic. Dutch process cocoa powder has been treated with an alkaline solution to neutralize the acid, darken the color and, paradoxically, lessen the chocolate flavor. You can hear my podcast about chocolate here

https://www.culinarylibertarian.com/12

OliveNation has a variety of cocoa selections here.

**Eggs** Recipes calling for eggs default to a large AA egg. Since egg whites contain a lot of water, using extra large eggs can have a slight impact on your finished product. Since the additional water content cannot be known, how to adjust for that extra water is purely guess work. For certainty that the recipe will work, use AA Large.

**Flour** I use all-purpose for muffins. My preference is King Arthur, but any commercial brand of plain, not self-rising, flour will work.

**Lard** Lard is pork fat which has been processed to make pure white fat for baking and cooking. Lard has no flavor of its own. Its main contribution is fat, which makes baked goods moist. In pie doughs and biscuits, lard's larger fat crystals contribute to flaky pie crust and fluffy biscuits.

**Milk** Whole milk is best for baking due to the fat being flavor aspect and is the expected choice for baking these recipes. Milk is also expected to be cow milk. While such replacements as almond and soy might work, I cannot attest to the viability of those options.

**Non-fat dry milk (NFDM)** Dry milk powder, aside from being easy to transport, adds richness and flavor to baked goods where liquid milk would do that but also

make too wet the mix. Some dry milk powders do come with some level of fat, but it is common to see them non-fat.

**Oats** The greatest confusion over oats is which type: regular or quick cooking. In baked goods, they taste the same but do not look the same. Quick-cooking oats are chopped a bit to cook quickly and, as such, tend to be camouflaged in the baked goods. Regular oats are larger and are more easily seen. I do think regular oats are a better choice. However, since you are doing the baking, the choice is yours.

Do stay away from instant oats, unless specifically asked to use them. They have nothing to give for flavor or starch.

**Raisins** Most times raisins in baked goods are brown raisins. If you prefer golden raisins, there is no culinary difference and feel free to make that substitution. In either case, I soak raisins in warm water for 10-15 minutes for extra plumpness. That added water absorbed into the raisin will not affect the moisture level of your dough or batter.

**Salt** I prefer a mineral rich sea salt. All salt is not the same. Learn more about <u>salt here</u>. Kosher salt, or bulk sea salt, is acceptable if that's your best option. Since

salt comes in a variety of grain sizes, weight is more useful than volume.

#### Safety and Sanitation

Kitchens can be dangerous places. A burn or a cut can happen at any moment. Being organized and working attentively can help minimize that risk.

#### Safety

Perhaps the most danger in baking is a burn. Dropped items, such as flour or sugar, can be a slip and fall issue. Clean as you go if spills happen.

When working with dough or batter and eggs and butter, our hands can become slippery and drops and spills can present a slip and fall hazard.

Also, wear closed toed shoes. Between hot butter and heavy things, if something should fall on your feet, protecting your toes is a good plan.

Working cleanly takes practice and patience. Also, cleanliness comes from establishing a consistent set of habits. Cooks and bakers use the term *mise en place*, a French term, to mean "everything in place." While it does mean the physical things in order, I also find a mental *mise en place* necessary. Here are some of the habits I have when baking.

After you measure an ingredient, return it

Crack eggs as part of the gathering ingredients step Avoid using glass bowls. In case they fall, they often break

As you use a utensil and are done, place it in the sink

Keep a salad plate or bowl near you to place spatulas and scoops in when not in use, but will be

Double check each ingredient has been measured before you start mixing

#### **Sanitation**

Baking tends to present fewer opportunities for cross contamination compared to butchery, but keeping the food safe is important and builds good habits.

Wash your hands, and often, if necessary. I prefer paper towels for drying as they are disposable and with them goes the germs.

Dairy and egg spills can present opportunities for cross contamination if not cleaned right away. A bowl placed in spilled egg or milk can leave bits of that goo on the counter. If not cleaned, that goo is transported around the kitchen and ready to eat food might be placed in it.

Tasting spoons are great ways to check the batter. I have espresso spoons, but plastic spoons or even your dinner teaspoons are okay. No fingers, please.

#### **Tabula Rosa Muffins**

350° F 12-15 minutes

I call these muffins blank slate muffins because they, more than most I've made, are so accepting of other ingredients.

Want to add blueberries or chocolate chips? No problem.

Want to add cocoa? Easy peasy.

See the notes about cocoa and baking in the ingredients section.

Muffin Mix

8 oz (230 g) All purpose flour 4 g Baking powder 1 g Baking soda 3 g Salt

76 g Butter, melted 170 g Brown sugar 1 egg 200 g Buttermilk, room temperature

Sift all dry together.

Melt and cool the butter. When the butter is not too hot, whisk the egg and brown sugar together until they are silky and smooth. Add the buttermilk and butter and stir to combine.

Fold the dry into the wet and at this time, add berries or chips or nuts.

\*If you wish to use cocoa, sift that into dry. For this recipe, add 1 T of cocoa to the dry and add an additional 1 oz (2 T) of buttermilk to the wet.

For raisin whole wheat muffins, soak 30 grams of raisins in warm water for 10 minutes. Add 30 grams of whole wheat flour to the dry and increase the buttermilk by 1.5 oz. (3 T) more.

Scoop the muffins into prepared tins, filling just over half way and, if desired, top with sanding sugar or streusel. Streusel is the crumbly bits sometimes used for eye appeal and crunch on baked goods. A recipe is included at the end of the book.

Bake for 16-20 minutes or until done.

Remove pans to a cooling rack and let cool 5 minutes. Once they are cool enough to touch, and the muffin doesn't break, remove from the pan and onto the cooling rack until completely cool or you've eaten them all.

#### **Corn Muffins**

350° F 15 minutes

Corn muffins in the South are a big deal and, as with nearly all food in the south has decades of tradition. Corn muffins are not exempt.

The big question is sugar or no sugar.

Well, these have sugar. I like them as they are, a bit sweet.

The can be doubled or tripled, but that makes a lot. This makes about 8-10 muffins, depending on how you scoop.

#### Liquid

5 oz granulated sugar 4 oz lard, just melted ¼ t vanilla extract 7 oz Milk 3 eggs

#### Dry

7.75 oz All purpose flour 3.75 oz coarse corn meal .75 oz (21 g) baking powder .25 oz (7 g) salt 1 oz Non-fat dry milk Place the lard to melt over really low heat. You want it melted but not hot. Too hot and that's time spent waiting to cool.

While the lard is melting, assemble the dry ingredients, remembering that the sugar is a wet ingredient in muffins.

When the lard is melted, whisk the eggs into the sugar to form a smooth yellow mix. Add the lard and stir again. It will come together. Add the milk and vanilla extract and whisk to fully combine.

Pour the dry mixture on top of the wet mixture and fold them together with a rubber spatula, using deep, edge to edge, strokes. You should be able to mix the mix in 10 stir motions or less.

Let the batter rest 5 mintues.

Scoop into prepared muffin pans, filling each muffin cavity 2/3 full. Bake at 350° F for 18 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean.

Remove the pan to a cooling rack and let cool 5 minutes. Remove the muffins and allow to finish cooling. Make sure you test at least one warm muffin from each pan to ensure quality. Use lots of butter.

#### **Apple Pumpkin Muffins**

#### 350° F 15-18 minutes

340 g whole wheat flour
150 g sugar
1 t ground cardamom
1 t ground ginger
1 t ground allspice
2 t ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 large eggs
1 can (15 oz.) pumpkin puree
4 oz butter, melted
130 g small diced apples
140 g buttermilk
Streusel topping

#### **Directions**

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Mix flour, pumpkin spice, baking soda and baking powder in large mixing bowl. Set aside.

Mix eggs and sugar in separate bowl. Add the butter, mix to incorporate and then add pumpkin puree and apples.

Fold wet ingredients into dry ingredients until just combined. Do not over mix.

Line muffin pan with baking cups. Fill each muffin cup <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> full and bake 20-22 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in muffin comes out clean.

These have a fine, tight texture which I enjoy. They are a bit delicate since whole wheat flour has less gluten available. Also, I've found baking them on the small side produces a better baked good, even if a bit small.

With this muffin, I would not store unbaked batter overnight. The apples will release liquid making the batter soupy and risking proper baking.

#### **Charlie Bread**

#### 425° F 35-40 minutes

Technically a muffin by mixing method, this bears little resemblance to muffins. It's baked in a 10" cast iron pan.

But, it is delicious and even better when a few minutes over-baked to get all the crunchy bits.

Very good all by itself with a lot of butter and also very good with chili.

We like it the next morning toasted and buttered.

Set the oven to 425° F. Place the cast iron pan inside.

2 eggs

1 each 8 oz can of creamed corn (or 8 oz of homemade) ½ C Corn oil or ½ C melted lard

1 C sour cream

1 C medium coarse corn meal

½ t salt

10 g baking powder

Whisk the eggs and sugar. Add the corn oil and whisk again.

Add the sour cream and creamed corn, whisk to incorporate.

Add the corn meal mixture to the liquid mixture and fold to mix about 10 times, with deep, wide stirs.

Pour into a drizzle of rendered bacon fat or lard into the pan. Turn the pan to coat the bottom.

Add all the Charlie Bread mixture to the pan. Place the pan in the center of the oven, reduce the temperature to 375° F and bake 35-40 minutes or until the edges of the Charlie Bread start to pull away from the sides of the pan.

Remove the pan and place on a cooling rack.

Place a table knife between the bread and the pan and push the bread away from the pan to release it. Do this all the way around.

Place a large plate upside down over the cast iron pan and carefully invert the pan to release the Charlie Bread.

It is important to do this while it is still warm to help ensure the bread releases.

#### **Lemon Poppy seed Muffins**

350° F 12 muffins 18 minutes or until done

Lemon juice's acidity can break down the proteins in the flour and egg, so not more than 20 ml. I did try a half batch with 15 and it was too much for the protein but didn't really increase the lemon flavor.

To enhance the lemon flavor, I did use this lemon extract. This amount was a nice light lemon flavor.

A size 20 scoop, just filled, was a good portion.

This recipe divides well for 12 muffins.

#### Ingredients

228 g All-purpose flour

4 g Baking powder

4 g Baking soda

4 g Salt

2 eggs

170 g Sugar

56 g Butter, melted and cooled

20 ml fresh squeezed lemon juice

10 ml vanilla extract

5 ml lemon extract

6 g Poppy seeds

120 g Buttermilk

Sift the flour, baking powder and soda and salt together. Add the poppy seeds.

Add the eggs to the sugar and whisk to form a smooth mixture. Add the butter and whisk to fully incorporate. Add the vanilla, lemon juice, lemon extract, and buttermilk and mix again.

Pour the liquid onto the dry and fold together. Turn the bowl and clean the sides as you fold the batter together.

Scoop into prepared muffin tins. This has a good oven boost so half full is right.

Top with sanding sugar or make a streusel of

20 g whole butter 50 g all-purpose flour 10 g sanding sugar 2 g salt zest of 1 lemon

Use the tines of a fork to mix the ingredients together and finish the mixing with your fingers. You want to make a crumbly mixture which will be sprinkled on top of the raw muffins before baking.

Bake at 350° F for 18 – 20 minutes or until a tester comes out clean. Remove to a cooling rack. Allow to

cool for 5 minutes then remove from the pan and rest the muffins on the cooling rack until cool.

#### **Carrot and Zucchini Muffins**

375°F 18-20 minutes

This is from a former chef I worked for. Back when it was thought healthy mean low or no fat, this was a good recipe. We now know, of course, that fat is good.

Carrot and zucchini in a muffin with some butter makes an excellent breakfast. The whole wheat is a nice flavor component and the walnuts add a bit of texture.

76 g whole wheat flour

45 g all-purpose flour

2 g baking powder

2 g baking soda

1/4 t ground cinnamon

1/8 t ground allspice

1/8 t fresh ground nutmeg

1/8 t salt

1 egg

35 g sugar

38 g buttermilk

58 g grated carrot

62 g grated zucchini

30 g unsalted butter, melted and cooled 21 g chopped walnuts, optional

Sift both flours, the spices, and salt together.

Whisk the eggs and sugar together. Add the cooled melted butter then the buttermilk. Finally add the grated carrot and zucchini. Pour the wet over the dry mix and walnuts.

Fold with deep and wide swipes of the rubber spatula, mixing not more than 10 times.

Let the batter rest 5 minutes then portion into 6-muffin tin cups and bake at 375°F for 15 minutes or until a tester comes clean.

## Bonus Recipe

This recipe has not, and will not, be published on the blog. This is only for you, the dear reader and baker.

I am pleased with how this turned out. I adore pumpkin and can't wait (who says I need to?) for Halloween again.

#### **Pumpkin Cream Cheese Muffin**

The ingredients are different, but the procedure is the same, with a tweak.

The cream cheese is creamed, not normally a step in muffin making. But, the integrity of the process in intact since all the wet is together and all the dry, too.

These came out perfectly. A vibrant orange color and none of that cloying pumpkin pie spice flavor.

15 oz (1 can) pumpkin puree 8 oz sugar 2 large eggs 3 oz cream cheese 1 t vanilla 11 oz all-purpose flour, sifted 1 t baking soda 1 t salt Freshly grated nutmeg 35 g chopped toasted pecans, optional (use your favorite nut)

Sift together the flour, salt and baking soda. Paddle the cream cheese on medium speed to make smooth. Add the sugar in additions of 4, allowing the sugar to be absorbed before the next addition.

Add the eggs, one at a time, waiting between each addition for full incorporation.

Add the pumpkin in thirds, scraping down the bowl after each addition. Add the nutmeg and vanilla.

Remove the bowl from the mixer and fold in all the flour mixture. Add any nuts at this time.

The batter will appear stiffer than regular muffins. This is to be expected, but avoid the urge to over-mix.

Be deliberate and thorough in your mixing, and minimalist. 10 folds should be enough.

Allow the batter to rest 10 minutes before scooping and baking.

Scoop into prepared muffin pans. I generally do not use papers and if you do not also, just pan release in the cups should do fine.

Top with a streusel if you prefer. I always think muffins need something on top.

#### Pecan Streusel

½ C Chopped pecans

½ C Light brown sugar

½ C Flour

2 oz unsalted butter, small dice

Work all ingredients together in a small bowl to make a crumbly mixture. Sprinkle some on top of each muffin before you bake them.

#### **Streusel Topping**

Streusel toppings add a nice texture to muffins as well as a nice aesthetic.

This basic topping, sometimes called a crumb topping, is very adaptable.

As long as you keep the ratios of ingredients intact, you can make a lot of changes. It can be increased or decreased as your needs require. Add spices as you prefer. Nutmeg is one of my favorite spices.

4 oz all-purpose flour 1 oz white sugar 1 oz brown sugar 2 oz unsalted butter ¼ t salt 1 t vanilla ¼ t cinnamon

Mix the butter and sugars together in a mixing bowl. Add the flour and vanilla and spices and mix together with the palms of your hands.

Crumb toppings get no liquid or egg which would develop the gluten and destroy the crunch and crumbly nature of the topping.

#### **Substitution ideas**

In each case, reduce the quantity of flour by the quantity of the substitute ingredient.

1-2 ounces of ground pecans or walnuts or hazelnuts 1 oz regular uncooked oats

#### **Spices and Flavors**

Allspice Allspice is a berry which resembles black pepper but is clearly not. It has notes of cinnamon, nutmeg and clove and as such, is a great addition in baked good and holiday treats. Unless you have a good spice grinder, whole can be difficult to grind. If possible, buy small amounts of ground from your grocery store's bulk spices section. Read more here,

https://www.culinarylibertarian.com/allspice

**Cinnamon** Sorry to say, but usually what you are buying as cinnamon is not. It's cassia. Tastes and looks very similar, but at much less the cost. The good stuff is Ceylon cinnamon. If you can't find that, cinnamon with a place named is better, and more expensive, than generic cinnamon. Store brand is almost certainly cassia. Read more here,

https://www.culinarylibertarian.com/cinnamon

**Nutmeg** Actually the seed of the nut, nutmeg is wrapped by a bright red or orange mesh called mace. The nutmeg seed is dried and then traded. For our needs, whole is better as the aroma disappears rapidly from already ground. A <u>microplane</u> is a very handy way to grate just what you need. Read more here, <a href="https://www.culinarylibertarian.com/nutmeg">https://www.culinarylibertarian.com/nutmeg</a>

**Mace** The pretty wrapping found on the outside of the nutmeg seed offers a taste different from nutmeg and at a price higher. While it is good to use, it has a high volatility. Between that and the price, I see little need for it in my house for muffins. Mace is quite amazing in Indian dishes and some English desserts.

Vanilla All vanilla is not the same. I buy from OliveNation. The owner, Amit, offers excellent products, but the real selling point is his customer service. Well worth the patronage. Vanilla extracts and vanilla beans and vanilla sugar are all used by bakers. I've written a blog post here with good details about vanilla and how it is produced.

**Fruit Extracts** Extracts are strong concentrations of flavor in a small jar. The best extracts have few ingredients and will usually be the flavoring fruit, alcohol and water. OliveNation has an excellent selection.

**Nut Extracts** Similar to fruit extracts, nuts are pressed and the essential oils is mixed with alcohol and water. Look for the fewest ingredients possible. I buy mine from <u>OliveNation</u>.

#### **Utensils**

I have a web page <u>here</u> with many of the specific tools I use. There are also some affiliate links and banners for products or purveyors.

#### Where to find more

I post to the Culinary Libertarian blog frequently. New recipes as well as book reviews and more are here, <a href="https://www.culinarylibertarian.com">https://www.culinarylibertarian.com</a>

You can also listen to and follow the Culinary Libertarian podcast. I publish a new show every Monday. The show notes page is

https://www.culinarylibertarian.com/podcasts

Each episode is located there. Each page has an embedded MP3 of that episode.

If you have comments or suggestions or requests for more recipes, feel free to contact me at

dann@culinarylibertarian.com

All the best and happy baking.

Dann Reid