

Oatmeal is hearty and healthy in breads, cookies, and muffins



By Portia Little

Mom knew what she was doing. Way before oatmeal became a popular food item in the 80s for possibly helping to lower blood cholesterol, she would fix big bowls of oatmeal in the morning. And, like it or not, we'd get it down mixed with butter, brown sugar, and real whole milk before heading off to school or work on a cold winter's morning.

And of course there were those irresistible raisin-studded oatmeal cookies, made from the recipe on the box. Now if you want to add oats to your diet there are so many delicious possibilities for using them in recipes such as yeast breads, cookies, muffins, scones, granola, and cakes.

Oatmeal's bland flavor makes it a natural for adding such ingredients as sugar, honey, maple syrup, apples, dates, and cinnamon. Some people use oatmeal to thicken chiles or soups. It is also an ingredient in some alcoholic drinks, cosmetics, and soaps.

In Scotland, oatmeal has long been a staple grain because oats are better suited to the short, wet growing season there than is wheat. And in fact the English essayist Samuel Johnson gave this disparaging definition of oats in his dictionary: "A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people."

His Scottish biographer, James Boswell, however, is said to have retorted: "Which is why England is known for its horses and Scotland for its men."

Here are some recipes to savor. The Dartmouth Club Bread is worth the time and effort. Slice thick and pile on butter. And the sweet treats are sure to cheer you up on a cold March day.

DARTMOUTH OUTING CLUB OATMEAL BREAD

- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 cup oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons shortening
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 cake yeast or 1 envelope dry yeast
- 1/2 cup lukewarm water
- 5 to 6 cups flour

Pour boiling water over oatmeal. Add shortening; cool. Mix in molasses and salt. Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water and add to oatmeal mixture. Beat in flour gradually. Knead by hand or with dough hook in electric mixer about 8 minutes. Let rise in greased bowl about an hour or until doubled. Shape into 2 loaves, place in greased loaf pans, and let rise again until doubled. Bake at 350 degrees F. about 50 minutes.

COWBOY OAT COOKIES

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder

- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts (may omit)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Beat butter with sugars; beat in egg and vanilla until fluffy. Stir in combined flour, cocoa, baking powder and soda. Add oats, chocolate chips, raisins, and nuts. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls 2 inches apart on greased cookie sheets. Bake 10-12 minutes. Cool on wire racks. Makes about 4 dozen.

APRICOT OATMEAL BARS

- 3 cups dried apricots
- 3 cups water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1-3/4 cups oatmeal
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 3/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/4 cup wheat germ
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Stir apricots, water and sugar in saucepan over medium-high heat until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat and simmer until most of water is absorbed, 15-20 minutes. Remove from heat; mash apricots. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Combine remaining ingredients in bowl. Press half of crumb mixture into greased 9x13-inch pan. Spread with apricot mixture, then with remaining crumbs, pressing down to flatten. Bake 30-35 minutes, until lightly browned. Cool and cut into bars. Makes about 2 dozen.

NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE OATMEAL COOKIES

- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1 stick butter
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 cups sugar

- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 cups quick oats

In pan, combine cocoa, butter, milk, and sugar; bring to a boil. Boil 1-2 minutes; remove from heat and add peanut butter and vanilla. Pour hot mixture over oats in large bowl. Stir to combine. Drop by rounded spoonfuls onto wax paper-lined cookie sheets. Cool. Makes 3-4 dozen.

HONEY OATMEAL BREAD

- 2 tablespoons dry yeast
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1 1/2 cup quick-cooking oatmeal
- 3 cups water
- 1/3 cup melted butter
- 1 3/4 tablespoons salt
- 3/4 cup honey
- 7 1/2 cups flour
- 1 egg white, beaten slightly with fork

In bowl mix yeast with hot water and let stand. Mix oats, 3 cups water, melted butter, salt, and honey in large mixing bowl. Add yeast and water mixture. Beat in flour until combined.

Knead about 8 minutes either by hand or with dough hook in electric mixer. Shape into 3 loaves and put into greased loaf pans. Let rise about 1 hour. Coat top of loaves with egg-white and oats before baking. Bake at 325 degrees about 35 minutes or until loaves sound hollow when tapped. Yield: 3 loaves.

Portia Little is the author of five theme gift cookbooks: *Recipes, Roses & Rhyme*; *The Easy Vegetarian*; *New England Seashore Recipes & Rhyme*; *Finger Lakes Food, Fact & Fancy*; and *Lusty Limericks & Luscious Desserts*, which are available at *Jamestown Designs, Conanicut Ship Store & Chandlery, Cathryn Jamieson Salon, and Grapes & Gourmet*.

Chocolate Corner

EASY CHOCOLATE LAYER DESSERT

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, melted
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 3-1/2 cups, plus 2 tablespoons milk, divided
- 8 ounces whipped topping, thawed
- 2 4-ounce packages chocolate instant pie pudding

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Combine flour, chopped nuts, and melted butter. Press onto bottom of greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool. Beat cream cheese, sugar, and 2 tablespoons milk until smooth. Fold in 1/2 of whipped topping; spread onto cooled crust. In bowl, add pudding mixes to 3-1/2 cups milk. Beat 1 to 2 minutes or until well blended. Pour over cream cheese layer. Refrigerate 4 hours or until set. Spread with remaining whipped topping. Serves 16-20.

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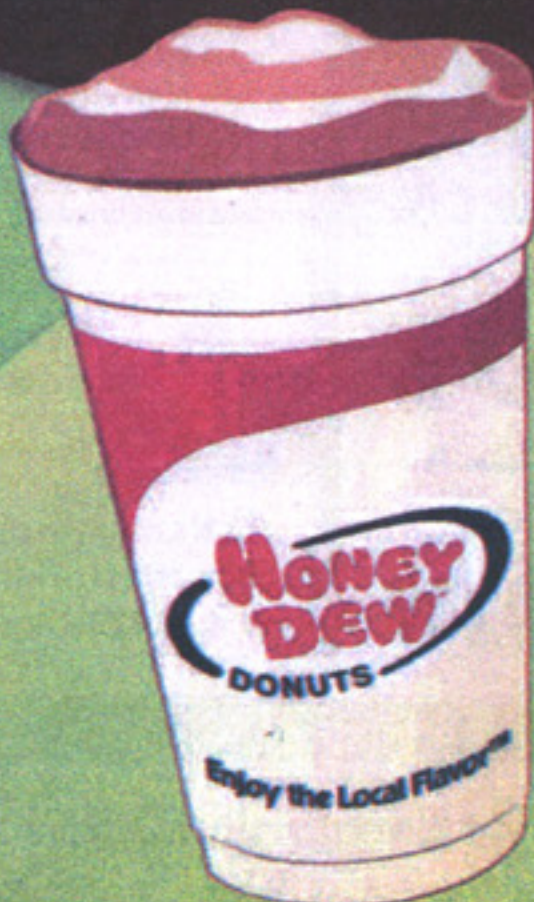
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