

Muffins, Biscuits, and Ambrosia

by Lydia Lovell

From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

Passing a linen napkin-lined basket full of right-out-of-the oven muffins at breakfast is good-old-fashioned-Yankee practice. Unfortunately, most of us have allowed the habit to fall into disuse in recent years; that is a real loss. How will youngsters ever grow up properly if they can't look back, as adults, and recall slathering hot muffins with butter and jelly at the breakfast table?

In the muffin department there used to be all the old stand-bys: bran, oatmeal, blueberry, cranberry, spice, cinnamon, and apple. And then, if you were lucky enough to share breakfast with Uncle Henry and Aunt Olivia, there were **Ice Cream Muffins**. Aunt Olivia had a good hot fire going when she made these for us in the early morning. You'll want to preheat your oven to 425°.

1 pint vanilla ice cream **1-1/2 C. flour**
1 egg **1 T. baking powder**
2 T. cooking oil **1 t. salt**

Oil a 12-section muffin tin and set aside. While the ice cream softens a little in a large mixing bowl, beat the egg and oil together in a small bowl. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Using a wooden spoon, stir egg mixture into ice cream; then resift the flour mixture over the ice cream, stirring with the wooden spoon until well blended. Fill muffin pan cups to 3/4 level. Bake about 20 minutes until muffins are golden on top and a toothpick comes out clean when poked into center. These muffins have a light, fluffy texture and a glistening surface. Everybody in the Lovell family likes them.

Just as good? Almost as good? Even better? It all depends on what's served, I think. Whether muffins or biscuits, whatever comes out of the oven is everyone's favorite. These hot biscuits are not only just as delicious as muffins but are southern hospitality personified, and you don't have to be a southerner to appreciate **Breakfast Biscuits**:

3 C. self-rising flour **1/2 C. margarine**
3 t. baking powder **1-1/4 C. buttermilk**
2 t. confectioners sugar **2 T. melted butter**

Preheat oven to 450°. In a large bowl, combine dry ingredients. Add shortening and, using two knives, cut in until mealy. Stir in buttermilk. Turn batter out on floured board and knead a few times; then roll to 3/4" thickness and cut with round cookie cutter. Place on greased baking sheet and pop into the oven for 12 minutes. As soon as you remove biscuits from the oven, brush the tops with melted butter. Serve immediately, of course.

Along with either Breakfast Biscuits or Ice Cream Muffins, you might choose to serve scrambled eggs. Aunt Olivia liked to tell the story about a young seaman who made his way to Cape Cod aboard a coasting vessel. He had signed on as cook during the vessel's layover in New Orleans, Louisiana, and when he arrived on the Cape found its climate compatible and its people friendly. So satisfied was he, as a matter of fact, that he left the sea, settled down, and married the captain's daughter. He spent the rest of his days on Cape Cod and supported his family as a chef at one of the Cape's popular inns. Among dishes for which he grew famous was **Cajun Scrambled Eggs**; this makes enough for two servings.



1/3 C. chopped sweet green or red peppers
1/4 C. chopped onion
4 eggs

Heat cooking oil in a 10" skillet. Sauté peppers and onions in oil over medium heat for 4 minutes, just until tender. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, beat eggs until foamy and lemon-colored, add chopped tomatoes and seasonings. When onions and peppers are cooked, pour egg mixture into skillet. Lower heat and cook until firm but still moist, stirring from bottom with a spatula as eggs begin to set. Serve immediately.

Uncle Henry enjoyed a hearty breakfast every weekday morning, but sometimes on Sunday, particularly if he had stayed up later than usual on a Saturday evening, he didn't get up quite as early, nor want quite so big a breakfast. On such Sundays Aunt Olivia sometimes served **Glazed Cranberry Coffee Cake**, made the day before.

1 C. sugar **1 t. baking powder**
1 stick margarine **1 t. baking soda**
2 eggs **1 C. sour cream**
1 t. vanilla extract **1 16-oz. can whole cranberry sauce**
2 C. flour **1/2 C. chopped walnuts**

Preheat oven to 375°. Cream sugar and margarine. Beat in

eggs and vanilla. Sift dry ingredients together and add to mixture alternately with sour cream. Mix quickly until just blended. Pour half the batter into a greased and floured 10" tube pan. Over the batter spoon two-thirds of the cranberry sauce. Pour remaining batter on top. Add rest of cranberry sauce. Sprinkle surface with chopped nuts. Bake 45 to 50 minutes. Cool on wire rack before glazing.

Glaze: Beat together until smooth: 1/2 C. confectioners sugar, 2 t. warm water, and 1/2 t. almond extract. Spoon glaze over cooled coffee cake. After glaze has set, reheat cake, if desired, by wrapping in foil and placing in 325° oven for 10 minutes.

Especially in their later years, neither Uncle Henry nor Aunt Olivia retained the hearty appetites of their youth. While they continued to enjoy their food, both preferred smaller, lighter meals than were once their habit. Often, instead of a roast for Sunday dinner, Aunt Olivia prepared **Mushrooms and Chicken Livers on Toast**.

2 T. minced onion **Salt and pepper to taste**
2 T. margarine **2 T. dry sherry**
1/2 lb. chicken livers **4 slices Italian bread, toasted and buttered**
1/2 lb. fresh mushrooms

In a 10" skillet, sauté onion in margarine 5 minutes until tender. Add washed and dried livers, cleaned and sliced mushrooms, salt and pepper. Stir gently while cooking over medium heat, 10 minutes, or until livers are cooked. Stir in sherry. Serve on toast. Any leftovers are good with boiled rice. Or thicken the sauce a bit and serve over cooked noodles.

On the other hand, should guests drop in and accept a dinner invitation, turn this easy meal-for-two into a sumptuous repast for four to six by preparing **Broccoli Stuffed Baked Onions**.

3 Spanish onions, each one about 3" in diameter
1 10-oz. pkg. frozen chopped broccoli, cooked and drained
1/2 C. grated Parmesan cheese **2 T. flour**
1/4 C. mayonnaise **1 C. milk**
2 t. lemon juice **1/4 t. salt**
2 T. butter **1 3-oz. pkg. cream cheese**

Peel onions and cut in half, horizontally. Parboil in salted water 12 minutes. Drain. Remove centers, leaving a 3/4" shell. Chop centers to equal one cup. (Save any remaining to season gravy, etc.) Combine chopped onion, chopped broccoli, Parmesan cheese, mayonnaise, and lemon juice. Fill centers of onion halves with broccoli mixture. In a small shallow baking pan, arrange stuffed onions.

In a small saucepan, melt butter, blend in flour and salt. Add milk and cook until mixture thickens, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and blend in cream cheese cut into small pieces. Spoon sauce over onions; bake uncovered at 375° for 20 minutes.

For dessert, layer fresh fruit in a crystal bowl, using orange, grapefruit, and tangerine sections, sliced bananas, finely chopped pecans, shredded coconut, and powdered sugar. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour before serving. Pass a small bowl of shredded coconut for sprinkling. And call it **Ambrosia**. Bon appetit.