
HERBED BLACK QUINOA MUFFINS WITH SWEET POTATO AND CARAMELIZED ONIONS

The first time I tested this muffin recipe and ate one warm from the oven, I couldn't believe how much I enjoyed it. The mashed sweet potato in the muffin mix adds a pleasantly moist and sweet background to the onions, herbs and delicate crunch of black quinoa.

For a variation, try substituting winter squash for the sweet potato and adding rosemary in place of thyme. You can also use any leftover cooked grain in place of the black quinoa. Toasted pecans or walnuts are a tasty addition to the mix too. Whatever you use, your kitchen will smell inviting and you'll end up with a delectable savoury treat.

NOTE: If you forget to soak the quinoa, increase the water by 2 tablespoons and cook for 20 minutes.

MAKES 10 MUFFINS

BLACK QUINOA:

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) black quinoa,
washed and soaked 12 to 24 hours in
240 ml (8 fl oz/1 cup) filtered water
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) filtered water
Pinch sea salt

MUFFINS:

2 tablespoons ground flax seeds
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) plain soya
milk or homemade plain nut milk
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60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) plus 1 tablespoon
extra virgin olive oil
1 onion, diced
2 tablespoons chopped sage leaves
2 teaspoons chopped thyme,
plus thyme sprigs to garnish
1 teaspoon sea salt
150 g (5½ oz/1½ cups) sprouted spelt
flour or sprouted wholewheat flour
1 tablespoon aluminium-free
baking powder
¼ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
(baking soda)
200 g (7 oz/1 cup) mashed sweet potato
(see sidebar)
180 ml (6 fl oz/¾ cup) filtered water
2 teaspoons unpasteurized
apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon tamari

COOK THE BLACK QUINOA:

Drain and rinse quinoa. Place in a small pan, add the water and salt and bring to the boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover pan and simmer for 15 minutes or until all water is absorbed. Remove from heat and allow to sit, covered, for 10 minutes; fluff with a fork. Measure out 90 g (3 oz/½ cup) and set aside. Save the remaining couple of tablespoons of quinoa to sprinkle over muffins.

MAKE THE MUFFINS:

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Line a muffin tin with 10 muffin cases. Place flax seeds and soya milk in a medium bowl and whisk to combine. Set aside to thicken while you cook the onion.

Warm 1 tablespoon olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté for 5 minutes or until golden brown. Add sage, thyme and ½ teaspoon salt; reduce heat to low and continue cooking for another 5 minutes or until caramelized. Remove from heat and set aside.

Sift flour, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda into another medium bowl. Stir to combine and set aside.

Add sweet potato, water, vinegar, tamari and remaining ½ teaspoon salt to the flax-soya milk mixture and whisk until smooth. Add remaining 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil; whisk again and add flour mixture. Use a rubber spatula to stir mixture gently until almost combined, then fold in cooked quinoa and onions.

Divide mix between muffin cases, filling them all the way to the top. Garnish each muffin with a thyme sprig and a sprinkle of remaining cooked quinoa. Bake 45 to 50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Remove from oven; leave muffins in the tin for 5 minutes before transferring them to a wire rack to cool slightly before serving. Once cool, any leftover muffins can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for up to two days.

For 200 g (7 oz/1 cup) mashed sweet potato, peel 1 sweet potato (400 g/14 oz) and cut it into rough 1.2-cm (½-in) dice. Place in a steamer basket over boiling water and steam for 5 minutes or until soft. Remove from heat, transfer to a bowl, mash with a fork and measure out 200 g (7 oz/1 cup).

