



Sticky Icky Toffee Date Muffins with Quick Salted Caramel

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 15 / **Cook Time** 30 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

bake: to cook food with dry heat, as in an oven.

cream: to mix foods together until they become a smooth, uniform blend, like butter and sugar.

wet vs dry: to mix wet and dry ingredients separately before combining them: dry ingredients are flours, leavening agents, salt, and spices; wet ingredients are those that dissolve or can be dissolved (sugar, eggs, butter, oils, honey, vanilla, milk, and juices).

purée: to blend, grind, or mash food until it is thick, smooth, and closer to a liquid.

simmer: to cook a food gently, usually in a liquid, until softened.

whisk: to beat or stir ingredients vigorously with a fork or whisk to mix, blend, or incorporate air.

dissolve: to stir an ingredient, like sugar, into another ingredient, like water, until they become one substance; or to melt or liquefy a solid food, such as butter, chocolate, or sugar.

Equipment

- ☐ Oven
- ☐ Muffin pan
- ☐ Paper cupcake liners
- ☐ Small saucepan
- ☐ Cutting board
- ☐ Kid-safe knife
- ☐ Citrus juicer (optional)
- ☐ Dry measuring cups

- ☐ Measuring spoons
- ☐ Liquid measuring cup
- ☐ Medium mixing bowl
- ☐ Large mixing bowl
- ☐ Electric handheld mixer (or immersion blender)
- ☐ Spatula
- ☐ Whisk
- ☐ Toothpicks

Ingredients

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☐ Muffins:

- ☐ 8 oz pitted dates (about 8 to 10)
- ☐ 1/2 C raisins
- ☐ 1 T fresh lemon juice
- ☐ 3/4 C water
- ☐ 1 1/2 C all-purpose flour ****(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 1 1/2 C gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour)****
- ☐ 1 1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- ☐ 3/4 tsp salt
- ☐ 1 tsp baking soda
- ☐ 1 3/4 sticks or 14 T butter ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1 3/4 or 14 T sticks dairy-free/nut-free butter)****
- ☐ 3/4 C packed light brown sugar
- ☐ 2 eggs ****(for EGG ALLERGY sub 1/2 C mashed, ripe banana)****
- ☐ 1/2 tsp pure vanilla extract ****(for CELIAC/GLUTEN ALLERGY use gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor—check label)****

☐ Caramel:

- ☐ 1/4 C honey or agave nectar
- ☐ 1/4 C packed light brown sugar

- ☐ 1/8 tsp salt
- ☐ 1 T butter ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1 T dairy-free/nut-free butter)******
- ☐ sea salt flakes, optional

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Celiac/Gluten/Wheat: For 1 1/2 C all-purpose flour, substitute 1 1/2 C gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour. Use gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor.

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free butter in the Muffins and Caramel.

Egg: For 2 eggs, substitute 1/2 C mashed, ripe banana.

Instructions

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intro

The secret sweetness in this recipe are healthy dates, baked into dense muffins (or cake) that are drizzled with a quick caramel salted toffee—special enough to be served for company and simple enough to be enjoyed after a weeknight dinner. We will focus on the word and action, *purée* (pyoo-RAY), is a French word that means to strain and make pure. This word and action is used for cooked food, especially a vegetable or fruit that has been put through a sieve or a blender to make smooth. It can also be a soup made with ingredients that have been puréed.

chop + squeeze + simmer

Have your kids chop up **8 ounces of pitted dates** (about 8 to 10) and **1/2 cup raisins**. Add the dates and **1 tablespoon of lemon juice** to a small saucepan with **3/4 cup of water** and heat to a boil on your stovetop. Reduce the heat and simmer gently until the chopped dates soften and start to fall apart, about 3 to 6 minutes. Add **1/2 cup of raisins** to the saucepan, remove from heat, and set aside to cool completely.

preheat + measure + stir

While the date mixture cools, preheat your oven to 325 F. Then, measure and stir together your dry ingredients into a medium bowl: **1 1/2 cups flour**, **1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice**, **3/4 teaspoon salt**, and **1 teaspoon baking soda**.

combine + cream

Measure and add **1 3/4 sticks or 14 tablespoons butter** and **3/4 cup brown sugar** to a large bowl and cream together with a hand mixer or immersion blender until light and fluffy, about 3 to 5 minutes.

crack + purée + whisk

Crack **2 eggs** into the butter mixture, mixing well after each addition and scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Next, measure and mix in **1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract** along with the cooled date mixture and purée until smooth. Finally, whisk in your flour mixture (dry ingredients) until combined.

fill + bake

Fill a lined muffin pan with batter and bake for 15 to 20 or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out mostly clean with just a few crumbs stuck to it.

combine + dissolve

Meanwhile, make the Quick Salted Caramel (sticky toffee). In a small saucepan on your stovetop, combine **1/4 cup honey**, **1/4 cup brown sugar**, and **1/8 teaspoon salt** and bring to a simmer over medium heat, whisking to dissolve the sugar. Once the sugar dissolves and bubbles, remove from heat and swirl in **1 tablespoon of butter**. Make sure you spoon the toffee sauce over the muffins while they're still warm or it will become too thick to drizzle.

spoon + serve

When the muffins are finished baking, spoon the sticky toffee over each muffin and sprinkle with flakes of sea salt if desired. Serve with **Ooey Goopy Date Shakes!**

Featured Ingredient: Dates!

Hi! I'm a Date!

"You wouldn't know from looking at me, but I'm a deliciously sweet fruit! We dates don't have much water in us, so we are naturally dehydrated, and we have lots of fructose—that's a sugar found in fruit. We're better than candy because we're a tasty and healthy source of fiber and energy!"

History & Etymology

Dates are the fruit of the date palm, a flowering plant in the palm family.

It is uncertain where dates originated, but they may have initially started growing in the Middle East or the Persian Gulf. They are considered one of the oldest crops and have been grown in areas of North Africa and the Middle East for around 5,000 years.

Fossil records indicate that the date palm has been around for possibly 50 million years. Archaeological evidence for dates goes back to about 7000 BCE in the Middle East.

Because the date palm tree and its fruit have so many uses—from food to building materials—the date palm is known as the "tree of life" in the Middle East, and it is the national tree of Saudi Arabia. It is also an important symbol in Jewish and Muslim religions.

Spaniards had introduced date palm trees to the United States by 1769, where they grew at the Franciscan

Mission San Diego de Alcalá in San Diego, California.

The trees are used for shade in the desert; their leaves are used to make baskets, carpets, and trays; the trunks are used as a frame for tents and for making furniture; and the fiber is suitable for ropes, fish traps, brushes, and filling mattresses and pillows.

The word "date" comes from the Greek word "daktylos," meaning "finger," due to its shape.

Anatomy

Date palm trees can grow up to 100 feet tall. They grow slowly and can reach 100 years of age. Their fronds or leaves are 13 to 20 feet long, and they have spines along their stalks.

Dates, the fruit of the date palm, grow in clumps near the top of the tree, just below the fronds. The fruit can be oval or cylindrical in shape, one inch in diameter, and one to three inches long. Depending on the variety of dates, their color may be yellow, amber, red, or dark brown.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Choose dates that are plump, shiny, and not too wrinkled or hard. They should have a delicate fragrance rather than a pungent smell.

When dates are dried, they become very sweet. The low water and high sugar content give dates a long shelf life of many months to years! People have taken them for long boat trips, crossing deserts, and even living in fortresses as survival food throughout history.

You can eat dates whole or chop them up and add them to cakes, muffins, smoothies, shakes, cereals, or salads. For an appetizer, you can stuff dates with soft cheese, honey, and chopped nuts, wrap them with a thin slice of bacon or prosciutto, and then bake them for about 15 minutes.

Nutrition

Dates are full of potassium and fiber. One cup of dates has 27 percent of the recommended daily potassium requirement and 48 percent of the daily fiber.

Dates also contain vitamin A and several B vitamins. In addition, their high fructose content makes them a great natural source of energy.