

PENINSULA KITCHEN: Fridge muffins provide a healthful snack

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By Betsy
Wharton

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SCHOOL IS BACK in session and it's a good time to check in on your snack pantry.

I recently became a teacher at Port Angeles High School, where school starts at 7:45 a.m., and lunch doesn't start until 12:37 p.m.

Growing teenagers opt for extra sleep rather than breakfast and might be hitting a latte stand on the way to school for a sweetened caffeine drink.

By fourth period, a good hour or more before the cafeteria opens, there are lot of "hangry" — hungry and angry — kids (and teachers) struggling to get through class.

When we are grumpy, sleepy, dopey, weepy or forgetful, we don't learn (or teach) at our best.

For many of us, snacks have replaced some if not most meals in America.

In a recent issue of the Hartman Group Newsletter, food researchers calculated that, on average, snacks comprise 37 percent of Americans' eating occasions.

According to the Hartman Group, Americans follow the following guiding principles when it comes to their food preferences: fresh, less processed and nutrient-dense.

Snacks, however, tend to be unplanned, quick and generally less well-balanced and healthful than our meals.

A few years ago, the FDA released an update on the standard food pyramid called My Plate.

The current recommendation is that half of your plate be filled with fruits and vegetables at every meal.

That leaves the other half for all of the things we tend to eat the most of: grains, sugar, fats and protein.

A diet consisting of half fruits and vegetables is a challenging ratio for most of us to achieve, especially when you account for typical high-carb snacks.

Here is a recipe for a minimally sweet and maximally hearty muffin.

Delicious warm out of the oven, but even better: Stuff a few in a pocket to share for that mid-morning moment when the starvation alarm bell sounds.

Whole grains, minimal sweetener, dairy, eggs, fruits and vegetables make this snack almost as good as a well-balanced meal.

This recipe makes a very large quantity of batter.

If you are feeding a crowd go ahead and bake it all at once. Or keep a bowl of batter in the fridge and treat yourself to warm morning muffins in a jiffy.

Healthy fridge muffins adapted from "Whitewater Cooks" by Shelley Adams (2005)

2 cups whole wheat flour

2 cups all-purpose flour

6 cups rolled oats

8 teaspoons baking powder

2 teaspoons baking soda

6 teaspoons cinnamon

4 whole eggs

4 egg whites

4 cups yogurt (I substitute apple sauce for half the yogurt)

4 tablespoons canola oil

3/4 cup honey

1 cup grated apple

1/2 cup grated carrot

1/2 cup to 1 cup raisins

The drizzle (optional, feel free to add the extra honey to the batter for a sweeter muffin)

1/4 cup honey

3 tablespoons apple or orange juice

Combine wet ingredients in a very large bowl.

Combine dry ingredients together well and add to wet mixture.

Make the batter in the evening and leave in refrigerator overnight in a covered bowl.

In the morning add the apple, carrot and raisins to the batter or make it and bake all in one step.

Fill greased muffin tins and bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees.

Heat the honey and juice to drizzle over the top while the muffins are still warm (or to simplify, just incorporate the extra honey into the batter before you bake. Either way, it is not a low-sugar option).

Betsy Wharton is the proprietor of the Clallam Canning Co., a local purveyor of artisan pickles and other farm to jar goods. You can find her and her products at the Sprouting Hope Greenhouse at 826 E. First St. in Port Angeles. Or contact her at betsy@clallamcanningcompany.com.