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These Sour Cream Muffins From My Childhood Have a Surprising Secret Ingredient

Sour cream, cinnamon sugar topping, and mace are what make this muffin recipe so special.

The Kitchn | Ivy Manning



Credit: Perry Santanachote

I grew up in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, a small town that had one big department store called Prange's. Picture the massive store that Ralphie visits with wonder in *The Christmas Story*. Yup — there was even a Santaland on the top floor, complete with cranky elves. But as a foodie kid, it was the bakery in Prange's that held all the excitement for me.

Everything was fresh-baked right there, from the Cookie Monster decorated cookies on a stick (the '70s answer to cake pops) to my favorite treat in the world: sour cream muffins.

They were huge muffins with a crunchy cinnamon sugar topping and a buttery, fluffy yellow crumb with just a little hint of spice. Heaven to a vanilla-loving kid. But when the store closed, so did the bakery. Until recently, the muffins occupied only a vague memory in my mind, nagging me with a beloved taste lost forever.

Thanks to the miracle of the internet, though, I found a recipe online that claimed to be the original Prange's sour cream muffins. I tried it, and while it needed some tweaks and repeated testing to get the texture right, I did learn a few secrets.



Credit: Perry Santanachote

Ingredients in Sour Cream Muffins from Prange's

Beyond what you'd expect in a muffin recipe (sugar, butter, eggs, flour, baking powder), here are the ingredients in Prange's sour cream muffins that make it so special:

- **Sour cream:** I guess I shouldn't have been surprised that the recipe used a full cup of sour cream, (Wisconsin is the dairy state, after

all). It's what makes the muffins so tender, with a hint of tang.

- **Cinnamon sugar topping:** A sugar-spice mixture combined with butter create this muffin's crumbly, wonderful top.
- **Mace:** This was the biggest surprise of the recipe recreation. Mace, a seldom-used spice, is actually the net-like protective arils that grow around nutmeg. The flavor profile of mace is subtle with hints of pine, black pepper, and coriander. A little ground mace goes a long way, but even a little bit gives the muffins a delicious, mysterious flavor.

Now that I've fine-tuned the recipe, I make these sour cream muffins on the regular. They're perfect for a lazy Sunday morning and they reheat well in the toaster oven for at least three days. And because I need mace to make them, I've found that I'm dipping into the jar for other recipes.

Now I sprinkle a pinch of mace on my morning cappuccino, add it to butternut squash soup, homemade breakfast sausage, and even creamy fish chowder. Flavor memories are such a powerful thing; I'm really grateful I've been reacquainted with a favorite childhood treat, and a new spice drawer discovery.

Ingredients

For the topping:

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar

- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground mace
- 1 pinch kosher salt

For the muffins:

- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
- Cooking spray or paper muffin liners
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt

- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mace
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Place 1 stick unsalted butter in the bowl of a stand mixer (or large

bowl if using an electric hand mixer). Let sit at room temperature until softened. Meanwhile, coat a standard 12-well muffin pan generously with cooking spray, or line with paper liners.

2. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Make the topping:

1. Place 3 tablespoons unsalted butter in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high until melted, about 30 seconds. (Alternatively, melt in a small saucepan over medium heat.) Place 1/4 cup granulated sugar, 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon, 1/8 teaspoon ground mace or nutmeg, and 1 pinch kosher salt in a small bowl and stir to combine.

Make the muffins:

1. Place 2 cups all-purpose flour, 1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, and 1/2 teaspoon ground mace in a medium bowl and whisk until combined.
2. Add 3/4 cup granulated sugar to the bowl of butter. Beat with the paddle attachment on high speed until pale colored and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Beat in 2 large eggs, one at a time, scraping down the sides of the bowl after each addition. Add 1 cup sour cream and 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract and beat until combined.
3. Add about 3/4 of the flour mixture to the butter mixture. Fold in by hand with a rubber spatula until just combined (a few traces of dry flour are okay). Add the remaining flour mixture and stir until just combined, do not overmix.
4. Divide the batter evenly between the muffin wells (they will be very full). Brush the top of each muffin generously with the melted butter. Sprinkle with the sugar-cinnamon mixture (about 1

butter. Sprinkle with the sugar-cinnamon mixture (scant 1 teaspoon per muffin). It will look like a lot of topping, but that's a good thing.

5. Bake for 8 minutes. Do not open the oven door and reduce the oven temperature to 350°F. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean, 8 to 10 minutes more (dark pans will bake more quickly). Let the muffins cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Remove the muffins from the pan and serve warm or transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Recipe Notes

Storage: The muffins can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days; they do not freeze well. To reheat, loosely wrap a muffin in aluminum foil and bake at 400°F for 5 minutes to warm through.



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