

LOVE STARTS IN THE KITCHEN!™

By: Rita Nader Heikenfeld, CCP, CMH

Macy's Culinary Professional, Certified Modern Herbalist, Jungle Jims Staff Educator, Community Press Columnist, Adj. Prof. UC

RITA ON THE WEB!

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BLENDER WHOLE ORANGE DATE MUFFINS

So delicious and easy. Wouldn't Mom love these as part of your breakfast in bed you're serving her?!

Make up to a day ahead. Keep wrapped at room temperature. I like to make this with natural fruits found in **Jill Denton's Natural Food aisles**. Try and use Rumford's baking powder here, as it contains no aluminum. Using **organic ingredients** from **Natural Foods** assures you of good, healthy muffins.

1 juice orange, about 8 oz, with peel, washed and dried

½ cup orange juice

½ cup chopped dates

1 egg

½ cup (1 stick) butter, cut up and softened

1-¾ cup flour

¾ cup sugar

1 teaspoon each: baking powder and soda

½ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 400. Cut orange into 8 pieces and remove seeds. Put orange pieces, juice and dates in blender. Puree. Add egg and butter and blend. Set aside. In large bowl, mix flour, sugar, baking powder, soda and salt. Pour orange mixture over top and stir gently to combine. Pour into sprayed muffin tins, filling about 2/3 full, and bake 15-20 minutes, until top springs back when pushed with finger. Don't overbake. Makes 12 muffins, or about 18 mini-muffins. (If making mini-muffins, check after about 10 minutes).

Why this recipe is good for you:

- Oranges contain vitamin C and there is a tremendous amount of nutrients in the peel and white “pith.”
- Egg yolks contain Omega 3’s and B vitamins.
- Dried fruit is a terrific snack on its own, but cooks also use it in everything from muffins to stews. Drying has the obvious advantage of letting us enjoy our favorite fruit when it's out of season, but it also serves to concentrate the fruit's flavor and sugar. Since high concentrations of sugar ward off bacteria, dried fruit can last up to a year without refrigeration.
- Sulfur dioxide is sometimes added to the fruit to improve its shelf life and color. If you're allergic to it, you can find unsulfured dried fruit in the **Natural Food Section**. If you are in a pinch, you can remove some of the sulfur by boiling treated dried fruit for a minute or so, then draining off the liquid.

RITA’S HERB PICK OF THE WEEK: LAVENDER!**Banish the blues and sooth skin**

Excerpted from my book *Culinary Herbs that Heal Body and Soul*

Lavender means “to wash” and it is a great bath and aromatherapy herb. It can create a peaceful state of mind. During the plagues in France, glove makers used lavender to scent the leather. They were reputedly one of the few who stayed healthy! Like rosemary, lavender doesn’t like wet feet but does love sun and good drainage. Add lavender to honeys and sugars. Or mix with cider vinegar and distilled water for a soothing skin splash. Herbes de Provence always contain lavender.

All of Rita’s books are available in the Natural Foods Section!

MORE RITA, MORE FOOD, MORE HERBS, MORE TIPS!

Visit Rita at Kenwood Macy’s May 12 and 13!

During our Grand Reopening in Housewares, I will be cooking up some of my favorite Jungle and Community Press recipes with my favorite celebrity chefs. Call (513) 247-6390 for information!