

Oliver

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I like these muffins because they are not too sweet. Elaine recommended sprinkling sugar on top but I forgot to do that. It would be a good addition, give a little crunch, and maybe satisfy a sweet tooth as well. I also like the business of adding berries to the flour mixture before adding the milk, oil and egg. (Melted butter would be very tasty, but vegetable oil works just as well.) And I managed to do exactly as Elaine directed: I mixed it all together with a fork. She wrote, “Stir gently with a fork, just until dry ingredients are moistened. Batter will be lumpy.” It was, and it came out beautifully. Elaine gets 18 muffins using her pans; I managed to produce 14, which was plenty to pass around to the fellows rebuilding my porch, and a couple other hungry types that lurk around the house.

P.S. Many thanks for the interesting recipes you have sent using vegetables in baked goods. I have a lovely bunch of recipes to try out, and will share them here anon.

Send queries or answers to Sandy Oliver, 1061 Main Road, Islesboro 04848. Email sandyoliver47@gmail.com. For recipes, tell us where they came from, list ingredients, specify number of servings and do not abbreviate measurements. Include name, address and daytime phone number. And make sure to check out Sandy’s blog at tastebuds.bangordailynews.com.

Corn

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aren’t quite as tender as with other methods, but the smoky flavor is just what I’m looking for.

Alternatives to grilling

You don’t have to cook fresh corn at all. We love it raw in salsas and salads, though that smoky taste from grilling can certainly perk up the flavor quotient in either dish.

Prefer to boil or steam your corn? Salt toughens the vegetable so do not add it to the water. And if you’re boiling the corn, bring the water

to the right temperature before you add the cob, again so the kernels don’t toughen.

Of course, you can also roast corn in the oven. But why would you do that on a hot day?

The microwave works well if only one or two cobs need to be steamed. More than that and you might as well steam a bunch of them on the stovetop. To microwave, place one or two ears in a dish with a little water and cook on high (2 minutes for one ear, 5 minutes for 2 ears).

A bit of seasoning

Perfect as corn is, many of us reach for butter to lift this lily of a treat. Flavored butters are one of those

quick tricks of the kitchen. Simply soften butter and add the flavorings. Then either smooth the mixture into a container or roll it into a log and wrap it in plastic wrap until it’s time for guests to cut off slices for their corn. Either way, store it in the refrigerator.

Some flavor options: To 2 sticks of butter, add either 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper or 1 teaspoon minced garlic or 1 teaspoon minced chives or sea salt to taste.

Get the corn ready — Refrigerate unhusked corn in a loose plastic bag until you need it, preferably for not more than a day.

— Don’t husk corn until you are ready to eat it.

Bread

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when he was 10, bread, like any family business, is baked in his DNA.

“I’m making a product that people enjoy,” he said without breaking his work rhythm.

It keeps him firing away six days per week.

Moving from a white bread focus to more healthful options such as marble rye and multi-grain has boosted Botto’s sales. The buy-local Maine economy also helps, enabling the Portland family to employ more than 20 people. But when someone doesn’t show up for work, the brothers jump in. They bake, slice, bag and drive bread to its destination.

“It’s hard to find skilled help that want to work these hours,” said Stephen Mathews, 53. “That’s the challenging part.”

Family helps. Stephen Mathews’ brother handles

financials, and his four children work at the bakery. Checking in together about 6 p.m., his 18 year-old triplets, Shannon, Erin and Colleen Mathews, go straight to work.

“I like it, it’s very family connected,” said Shannon Mathews, stretching rows of wheat sandwich rolls.

While other bakeries are closing, Botto’s is rising. Business is brisk, up over last year.

Though not rolling in dough, “it’s a living. I have four kids in college. It pays the bills,” said Stephen Mathews.

Amid the Maine artisan food boom, Botto’s stands out in its indifference to food accolades and James Beard nods. It’s industrial, authentic and real. Feeding the masses.

Though it’s unrelenting, and unglamorous, Stephen Mathews is unfazed.

“I’ve been doing it long enough I kind of ignore it,” he said in a sweat-drenched T-shirt. “The sooner we get done, the sooner we get to go home.”

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