

Taste

RECIPES, NEIGHBORS AND PUZZLES

Try a little strawberry butter with your muffin

May is strawberry season for local farms.

Hinton's Orchard already has started advertising its berries. And I am sure other farms will too.

Recipes using fresh strawberries are always a hit at Derby parties, Mother's Day celebrations as well as graduation gatherings.

Today's recipe is not one but two recipes that use fresh strawberries and can be served together. They are Strawberry Muffins and Strawberry Butter. Both are from thetaylorhouse.com.

These recipes are both pretty simple. The hardest part, actually the most time-consuming part, is chopping or dicing up the fresh strawberries.

Strawberry Muffins recipe makes 12 To 14 muffins and use the following ingredients – 1 cup fresh chopped strawberries (frozen made be used), 1 ¾ cup all-purpose flour, ½ cup granulated sugar, 1 tablespoon baking powder, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, ¼ cup vegetable oil, 1 large egg, and ½ teaspoon salt.

Whereas the Strawberry Butter recipe makes about ¾ cup of flavored butter. The ingredients needed for Strawberry Butter are 1 stick of softened butter (1/2 cup), ½ cup fresh diced strawberries, 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract, 2 tablespoons of confectioners sugar (or 2 table-



CHERIE MINGUS/The News-Enterprise

Make good use of fresh strawberries available now with a pair of simple recipes.

spoons of honey) and ½ teaspoon of salt. If you are using salted butter, leave out the additional salt.

To prepare the muffins preheat the oven to 350° F and line muffin tins with paper liners. Wash and dry strawberries if using fresh strawberries. Frozen strawberries may be used for this recipe but do

not thaw the frozen strawberries. Chop 1 cup of strawberries. Set these aside.

Using a small bowl, mix the vegetable oil, vanilla extract, milk and egg. Beat till everything is well combined. In a larger bowl, mix the dry ingredients – flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Add the chopped strawberries to

the flour mixture and then pour the wet ingredients over the dry ingredients with the strawberries, mixing gently. Do not overmix as that will develop the gluten in the flour making the muffin less tender and dense.

Fill the lined muffin cups two-thirds full and bake 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool on a rack for 10 minutes.

These muffins are best served warm and with the strawberry butter.

To prepare the Strawberry Butter, whip together the softened butter, powdered sugar (or honey), vanilla extract and salt, if using unsalted butter. Once the butter mixture is whipped, add a drop of pink or red gel food coloring if you wish. Add the strawberries and mix until well blended.

Add additional sugar or honey if you want your butter to be sweeter.

Use strawberry butter with the strawberry muffins, bread, rolls or anything that you would normally put butter or jelly on such as homemade biscuits.

After making strawberry butter, try adapting the recipe to make other flavored butters such as cinnamon or herb butters for your breads.

Make use of locally grown strawberries as they will not be in season too long. Support your local farmers as you know your produce will be fresh.

Try one or both of these recipes for your next celebration because Life is Sweet.

Cherie Mingus is a retired teacher who taught family and consumer

sciences at Central Hardin High School. She can be reached at cheriemingus@gmail.com.

STRAWBERRY MUFFINS

Ingredients

- 1 cup chopped strawberries
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup milk
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon salt

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line muffin tins with paper liners.

In a small bowl, mix together the oil, vanilla, milk, egg and beat lightly.

In a larger bowl, mix together the flour, salt, baking powder and sugar.

Add the chopped strawberries to the flour mixture then pour the milk mixture into the dry ingredients and gently mix together. Avoid overmixing.

Fill your muffin cups two-thirds full and bake for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for 10 minutes before eating.

STRAWBERRY BUTTER

Ingredients

- ½ cup (1 stick) of butter (softened)
- ½ cup fresh diced strawberries
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar (or honey if you prefer)
- ½ teaspoon salt (if using unsalted butter – omit if using salted butter)
- One drop red or pink gel food coloring if desired

Instructions

In a small bowl, whip together the butter, powdered sugar or honey, vanilla extract and salt (if using unsalted butter) until everything is well blended.

Mix the strawberries into the butter mixture until it is well combined.

Use the Strawberry Butter on bread, rolls, muffins or anything you would use traditional butter or jelly on. This is amazing on warm bread right from the oven and it goes great with the previous Strawberry Muffins.

Add a little pop with this South of the Border snack

Mexican inspired food is a favorite in homes across the U.S. This vibrant and colorful culture has shaped culinary preferences in both large and small ways.

We don't think twice about grabbing salsa from the grocer's aisle or mashing up an avocado or two. And we all seem to spend time comparing and trying to find the perfect hot sauce.

Our enmeshed physical and cultural roots include popcorn, a type of maize.

Some of the oldest examples of maize were found in the Bat Caves of west central New Mexico and in the Tehuacan Valley of central Mexico. Pods at various sites were found to be some 4,000 to 7,000 years old.

In South America, people valued their popcorn enough to be buried with it. Bags filled with popcorn were found in burial grounds of ancient people of the coastal deserts of North Chile. The kernels were so well preserved they still popped even though they were 1,000 years old.

And 16th century Aztec Indians used popcorn as decoration for ceremonial headdresses, necklaces and ornamentation. Young women danced a "popcorn dance" and wore garlands of popcorn in their hair. Colonial Americans strung popcorn for Christmas décor.

For your next celebration, pop up a bowl of maize and create this culturally mashed up recipe

for Mexican Popcorn, courtesy of the Popcorn Board. It may just be the perfect treat for Cinco de Mayo next Tuesday.

MEXICAN POPCORN

Ingredients

- 2 quarts popped popcorn
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce (or to taste)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons roasted and salted pepitas (pumpkin seeds)

Directions

Place popcorn in a large bowl. Mix butter and hot pepper sauce and toss with popcorn. Mix remaining ingredients and sprinkle over popcorn. Toss again and serve.



The Popcorn Board

If you are looking for a Cinco de Mayo treat or more zest in your snack choices, pull out your hot pepper sauce and chili powder to make Mexican Popcorn.

Stir well, slap lightly: Tips for making a mint julep

BY LOUISE DIXON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Horseshoes are poised, bets are on, hats are at the ready and the bourbon is standing by, ready to be poured into thousands of mint julep cocktails. It must be Kentucky Derby weekend.

America's most famous horse race says more than 125,000 mint juleps are consumed over the weekend at Churchill Downs. According to its website, that requires about 10,000 bottles of Kentucky bourbon, 2,250 pounds of freshly harvested mint and 475,000 pounds of ice.

But you don't have to be there in person to enjoy this classic cocktail. The julep — a simple mix of sugar, water, fresh mint, crushed ice and bourbon — is accessible and easy to recreate.

First, a little history.

Mint juleps have been consumed at the Kentucky Derby since it began in the late 19th century, but they became its signature drink in the 1930s. That's when the Derby created a commemorative cup to serve them in, and people began sneaking them home as souvenirs,

said Martha Dalton, co-founder of Never Say Die bourbon.

The julep's roots, she said, are in ancient Persia, where sweetened rose water tonic called "gulab" was used for its medicinal properties. It spread to medieval Europe, where alcohol was brought into the mix, and on into the American South, where there was an abundance of mint and bourbon distilleries.

Why does the drink maintain its Southern charm?

"Every sip is slightly different," said Angelos Bafas, a bartender and co-founder of Cato bar in London. The bar is named after Cato Alexander, the 19th-century Manhattan bartender believed to have popularized juleps.

"The ice dilutes and the aromatics of the bourbon open up as the day proceeds," Bafa said.

For a traditional mint julep, Bafas said, stirring the ice is key to getting the right amount of cold and dilution. Keep stirring until the outside of the cup turns frosty.

"People tend to forget that water is an ingredient, and it's actually one very active and important ingredient when it comes to juleps as it allows the bourbon to shine

through. And also it allows the drink to be more palatable," he said.

Plucking some mint from his homegrown plant and brushing it lightly against the side of the cup, he adds that the mint should be slapped (a light tap) not muddled (mashed).

"The mint has to release the delicate aromas," said Bafas, explaining that muddling "can give you this kind of grassy, very chlorophyll flavor."

CATO CLASSIC MINT JULEP

Single Serve

INGREDIENTS

- 2 ounces bourbon
- ½ ounce filtered water
- ½ ounce simple syrup
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- 10 fresh mint leaves
- 4 drops of mint tincture (optional)
- Crushed ice in a metal cup

Directions

Pour the whiskey into a julep cup, lightly slap the mint leaves to release their aroma and add them in. Stir briefly, then add the remaining ingredients and crushed ice. Stir until the cup turns frosty on the outside, then top with more crushed ice, garnish with a fresh mint sprig and serve with a straw.



LOUISE DIXON/Associated Press

A Mint Julep cocktail can be enjoyed outside of a race track if you know the secrets.