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## Kitchen Diva

### A Healthy New Year Without Dieting

This is the time of year when many people start diets. But after a few weeks of not getting enough to eat or eating food that does not taste good, most dieters give up, having "failed" once again. The truth is, though, it is the diets that are the failures, not the people who try them.

Instead of improving health, dieting is often harmful and counterproductive. Health statistics show that only 5% to 10% of those who diet and are able to lose weight are able to maintain that weight loss for more than a short time. Most dieters quickly regain the lost pounds -- plus a few extra -- and end up heavier than they started.

Diets promote unhealthy eating habits, often by eliminating nutritious foods. Dieters are encouraged to ignore internal body signals of hunger and fullness. Eventually, the ability to respond appropriately to these normal physiological processes is lost. Chronically hungry people become obsessed with food and are likely to overeat when an opportunity to do so presents itself.

This year, instead of trying yet another diet, resolve to make a positive change for good health. Focus on taking one step at a time, as changing behavior and attitudes is difficult and takes time. Here are some great tips from Linda Rellergert, regional nutrition specialist at St. Charles County University of Missouri Extension:

- Accept that there is no ideal body size, shape or weight. People come in a variety of sizes and shapes, and all can benefit from a healthy lifestyle. Research conducted by Steven Blair, director of research at the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research in Dallas, has shown that people can be both fit and fluffy. He notes "There will always be tall, skinny people and short, stocky people. That's out of our control. What we can do is exercise regularly, follow good health practices, and live life to the fullest."

- Make physical activity a part of every day. Benefits include reduction in blood cholesterol and lipids, lower blood pressure and relief from stress. Find activities that are fun and enjoyable, and that fit into daily routines. Walking, skating, dancing, bowling, gardening or playing with the kids are excellent ways to get physical.

- Get more sleep. Most of us get seven or fewer hours of sleep rather than the eight hours a night recommended by the National Sleep Foundation. This may seem like just a small deficit, but the effects are cumulative. Chronic sleep deprivation contributes to stress and tension, accidents in the home, workplace and on the road, and can cause difficulty in coping with the little everyday annoyances of life.

- Adopt normal eating patterns. Normal eating means regular meals and one or two snacks a day to satisfy physical hunger. Healthful food choices provide variety, moderation and balanced nutrition. Respect the body's signals of hunger and fullness by eating when hungry and stopping when satisfied. Normal eating also means eating more on some days and less on others, and trusting that it will balance out over time. Finally, find non-food ways to cope with stress.

Here are some tasty and easy to prepare breakfast or snack muffins with variations that are guaranteed to start your New Year's off in a healthy way!



Photo Credit: DepositPhotos

#### BASIC MUFFIN MIX

- 1 1/2 cups old fashioned oats
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 cup maple syrup or honey
- 1 cup milk any kind
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

You can prepare the basic mix or add the following ingredients to the recipe to create 4 variations of this recipe:

- 1 cup blueberries fresh or frozen and 1/4 cup sliced almonds or;
- 1/2 cup natural peanut butter or nut butter, or;
- \* 1/4 cup cocoa powder and 1/4 cup mini chocolate chips, or;
- 1/4 cup chia seeds, 1/4 cup shelled pumpkin seeds, 1/4 cup shelled sunflower seeds, 2 tablespoons ground flax and 1/4 cup chopped, toasted almonds.

1. Heat oven to 350 F.
2. Line a muffin tray with silicone or parchment liners, or spray generously with spray oil.
3. In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together for preferred recipe. Spoon in or use a cookie scoop to place into the prepared muffin liners or tin. Try to get oat mixture and liquid evenly divided between all liners.
4. Bake for 20-25 minutes, until lightly golden and no longer jiggling in the center. Cool completely before storing. Makes 6-8 muffins.

TO STORE: Keep in a sealed container at room temperature for up to 4 days. Store in the freezer in a heavy freezer bag (remove excess air with a straw) for up to 3 months.

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Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is [www.divapro.com](http://www.divapro.com). To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis.

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