



## Amy's Tornado Muffins

Just before the clouds rolled in and the sirens wailed and that maple tree in your backyard suddenly became your neighbor's, a storm of an entirely different sort was blowing up in my kitchen. My wife, who is a significantly better mother than meteorologist, began to bake scratch muffins as an after-school snack for our kids, entirely unaware that the storm of the decade was advancing like a giant rolling pin from the west. What she was aware of was that some of the ingredients she needed for this favorite recipe were not in the house, while a couple of others were past their prime. The wind began to pick up. Apparently, when life hands you tornadoes, you make different muffins.

As near as my wife can recall, this was the warm treat awaiting my sopping wet babies when they stumbled through the door shortly after our house was surrounded by twisters. It's a muffin that is, in equal parts, a mother's tenacious love and a good cook's high-wire resourcefulness. It's not a recipe for the faint of heart. As a matter of fact, not only is it *not* necessary to follow this recipe to the letter, it would probably be truer to the spirit of the recipe if you didn't. Eating them in brooding darkness by candlelight is entirely up to you.

Step 1. Notice the sideways trees and preheat the oven to 400°F.

Step 2. Process the news that your kids' school is closing early and whisk together 3 cups of flour, which is not quite enough, plus 1/2 cup of wheat flour to make it so. Add 2 teaspoons of baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and 1 1/2 cups of finely ground almonds in place of the pecans you don't have that the original recipe is imagining you do.

Step 3. While a 300-year-old oak is caving in your friend's sunroom, casually crack 3 large eggs into a large bowl and whisk. Slowly add 3/4 cup of sugar and keep whisking until it's a pale yellow color. Like the sky.

Step 4. As something wicked this way comes, whisk in 1 cup of cold milk (or 1/2 cup of milk plus 1/2 cup of yogurt, if that's all you happen to have), and 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract. Stir in 1 stick plus 3 tablespoons of melted butter. Feel the pull of maple syrup and add 2 tablespoons now.

Step 5. Admire how the air-raid sirens can be clearly heard over the wind that's playing your house like a harmonica. Blithely add the dry ingredients to the wet and stir. When nearly mixed, fold in 2 cups of fresh or frozen blueberries.

Step 6. To a vision of groundwater rising in your sump pump, carefully spoon the batter into the well-buttered cups of a six-muffin tin.

Step 7. By the light of snapping power lines, calmly slide the muffins into that pre-heated oven for 35 to 40 minutes.

Step 8. Alternately notice the time and the raging tempest outside. Put two and two together. Jump into your car to rescue your kids and four of their soaked, screaming friends, who appear to have taken a shortcut through a carwash. If you can arrange it, completely lose power in your house around this time.

Step 9. Arrive home. Wrap your kids in big bath towels. Light some candles and suddenly remember those muffins that you put in the oven awhile ago.

Step 10. To your utter astonishment, remove inexplicably perfect muffins from the oven. Serve them warm, by candlelight. As the storm passes and you pass around the cold milk or hot tea with honey, by all means, count your blessings.

### Blueberry-Pecan Muffins

The above muffin recipe that fought off impending doom while also making a hearty snack was adapted from the delicious “Blueberry muffins with ground pecans recipe” on p. 271 of [Once Upon a Tart](#) by Frank Montesana and Jerome Audureau. It makes dense yet delicate blueberry muffins with a crunchy pecan and oat topping. Note that this was the one and only time that Amy actually didn't make the topping. Weather permitting, you should. —Jimmy Schwartz

### LC Some Blueberries With Your Muffin? Note

In case you're one of those types who just can't seem to get enough blueberries, this recipe makes a ginormous muffin bursting with sweet, nutty berries. If, on the other hand, you're the type who prefers a more modest-size muffin—one that's still bursting with berries, mind you—go ahead and make this muffin recipe in a regular-size muffin tin. Still can't get enough blueberries? Add an extra handful to the batter. And don't call us in the morning.

## BLUEBERRY-PECAN MUFFINS RECIPE

Quick Glance	10 M	50 M	Makes 8 ginormous or 24 standard muffins
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### INGREDIENTS

#### For the pecan topping

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 tablespoons pecans, chopped fine

2 tablespoons rolled oats, whole or pulsed in a blender

#### For the batter

11 tablespoons (1 stick plus 3 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted and cooled to room temperature; plus more for smearing the muffin tins

3 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups coarsely ground pecans (they should be finely chopped, like a coarse nut flour; they need to be so small that when you bite into the muffin, you shouldn't know there are nuts in it)

2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

3 large eggs

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1 cup cold milk

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 to 2 1/2 cups (1 pint plus a handful) fresh blueberries, rinsed and dried



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## DIRECTIONS

1. Position an oven rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C). Smear 8 big (we mean oversize in a big way) or 24 standard-size muffin pans with butter.

### Make the pecan topping

2. Stir all of the topping ingredients together in a small bowl.

### Make the batter

3. Whisk the flour, ground pecans, baking powder, and salt together in a medium-size bowl. In a separate, big bowl, whisk the eggs to break up the yolks. Still whisking with one hand, pour in the sugar with the other. Continue to whisk for a few minutes, until the eggs begin to pale in color. Whisk in the milk, vanilla, and melted butter.

4. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet, stirring gently with a wooden spoon. When there is still a little flour visible, gently stir in the blueberries, taking care not to break them up any more than is inevitable.

5. Scoop the batter up with a wooden or metal spoon and, using a rubber spatula, scrape the batter off the spoon into the cups of the muffin tin, filling each almost to the top. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the muffins. You may want to wipe any excess topping off the pan so you won't have to scrub burnt sugar from the tin after baking.

6. Bake the muffins for 35 to 40 minutes if making ginormous muffins or about 20 minutes if making standard-size muffins, until a toothpick or a small knife inserted deep into the center of a muffin comes out clean. No matter what size your muffins, they ought to have risen over the edges of the muffin tin and the topping should be golden.

7. Remove the tin from the oven and place it on a wire rack. Let the muffins sit in the tin for a few minutes until they're cool enough to touch. Then flip the tin upside down and let the muffins fall out onto the wire rack. Turn them right side up and try to stop at just one.

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