



Keep Your Sense of Humor

Once upon a time, the week before Christmas and New Year's, a bride got married in Buffalo, New York. Her parents, an elderly couple, wanted the reception in their home. The mother decided to use every piece of china she owned. She spent a great deal of time putting tiny pieces of paper on each stack of dishes to be sure the caterer would deliver the right pattern to the correct table. The caterers were very tired as they had been working non-stop for a solid month, with no relief in sight. The timbales flooded an oven that was so old the oven dial had been worn away ages ago, and so it was impossible to properly judge the temperature, and the water boiled instead of cooking at a slow simmer. There was no room in the refrigerator for the wedding cake, so it went out on the back porch in the snow. Not long after, when the plates got mixed up and the timbales turned to mush, a handsome young bartender burst into hysterical laughter. He stood transfixed. The back porch light illuminated a chubby squirrel with white frosting covering all his fur, paws, and whiskers with only two black, beady eyes blinking up at all of the people watching him. After we all rolled with laughter, the wicked caterer (me) shooed away the poor squirrel and re-did the frosting. The bride (we think) lived happily ever after.

The point: Things always go wrong. Checklists and lessons-learned notes are an important part of any process to be sure. However, no matter how hard everyone tries, things have a way of getting missed or going wrong—especially when everyone's tired or in a hurry. Spelling errors can be devastating on a proposal to a new client. Missed deadlines due to traffic can lose a job. And yet, the world goes on. Knowing how to prepare ahead can alleviate many problems.

Learn to laugh at yourself. It's the best medicine for the worst circumstances—just be sure you are in a safe environment when doing so. The bride's mother may not have been so happy if she came into the kitchen when everyone was hysterically laughing at a squirrel eating wedding frosting. In this case, the “what you don't know won't kill you” rule had to be put into place to save the day.

During the busy holiday season plan ahead with this pumpkin muffin recipe. These tiny muffins can be made ahead of time and frozen to be served as delicious, warm hors d'oeuvres. This recipe is fairly mistake-proof. Enjoy your holidays, your family, and friends and laugh a lot. Life is too short.



Pumpkin Muffins

Ingredients

1½ cups all-purpose flour
6 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
1 large egg (any color)
½ cup whole milk
1 cup Libby's pumpkin puree
¼ cup melted, salted butter

Supplies

Mini muffin tins
Sifter
Large mixer

Preheat oven to 400°.

Spray tiny muffin tins with Pam or grease with butter.

With a sifter, combine the dry ingredients in a bowl and blend well. In a large mixer, beat egg with milk, pumpkin, and butter until smooth. Stir pumpkin mixture into dry ingredients and blend until moistened. Spoon into muffin tins and bake until done—start watching around 10 minutes. Cool on a wire sheet. Remove from tins.

These muffins are great appetizers: Cut in half and serve with butter on the bottom, with either ham or turkey, and a nice mustard. They're extraordinary warmed up for a party and also a perfect do-ahead as they can be frozen once filled. To freeze, place in plastic containers with parchment paper in between muffins.