

ENGLISH MUFFINS NOW AN AMERICAN FAVORITE



In Victorian England, the "cruddy" upper class had their English muffins heated up and served to them on silver trays. The common folk bought their English muffins from the "muffin men" who strolled the cobble streets of England. Today, the English muffin is popular in the U.S., where it is used in the preparation of breakfast, lunch, and dinner dishes.



Did you know that until recently English muffins had virtually disappeared in England? The once popular British specialty had been supplanted by the scone.

Before it fell out of favor in England, the English muffin enjoyed a lengthy reign as the "most fancied" bread on the isle. The muffin started out at the lower rungs of class-conscious Victorian England. Back when English homes routinely had large household staffs, the family baker would combine the remains of all of the doughs and mashed potatoes he made for the "upstairs" that day, and fry the mixture on a griddle. The result was a tasty muffin for the "downstairs."

Soon the families "upstairs" discovered the delectable doings "downstairs," and began eating the muffins themselves. Victorian society even created an etiquette for serving them. Muffins would come served in a heated, covered silver dish, accompanied by a folded cloth napkin.

As English muffins grew in popularity, English muffin factories sprang up. Freshly-baked muffins were sold by colorful "muffin men," who could be seen strolling through the misty streets of England, ringing a small bell to get the attention of kitchen maids and housewives. The muffins would be split and toasted over an open fire and served at bedtime. Indeed, the "muffin man" and his goods were considered crucial to a successful bedtime. "Oh, have you seen the muffin man" became a familiar nursery rhyme to many British children.

The English muffin reached its heyday in England just before World War I. However, its popularity began to fade after World War II. By the 1950's it was rumored that only the Queen Mother had access to her own private supply. But by that time, the English muffin had found a home across the sea in America.

In 1933, George W. Bays, founder of Bays English Muffins, started making and selling English muffins in Chicago using an authentic recipe brought to America from England by his grandmother.

Bays uses the same recipe to make its muffins today, although potato flour now replaces the mashed potatoes called for in the recipe used by the "downstairs" staffs of England's Victorian kitchens. Bays muffins get their buttery, crunchy goodness from other natural ingredients including Hawaiian cane sugar, spring wheat flour and whole milk from Minnesota, AA butter from Wisconsin and Idaho potato flour.

English muffins were first sold in the U.S., not by "muffin men" bearing trays, but in paper sacks. Bays was among the first to package the muffins in the late 1930's.

The English muffin was considered a specialty item in America until the introduction of the now-familiar breakfast sandwich that combines a fried egg, cheese, and Canadian bacon on top of an English muffin. It allowed the public to rediscover the English muffin and to see new possibilities for cooking with the muffin. Today the English muffin is an American favorite. Word of the English muffin's popularity in the U.S. has even reached England, where Bays sells its product to an American-style restaurant chain.

The recipes here from Bays English Muffins demonstrate just a few of the imaginative ways English muffins can be used in cooking, any time of day. For more ideas on how to make the most of an English muffin, write for a free copy of the recipe booklet: "New Ways to Serve Bays," Bays Home Service Institute, 500 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

Monteury Muffin Melt

(serves 6)

6 English Muffins, split and lightly toasted
4 ounces alfalfa sprouts
12 slices turkey breast

Dipping Sauce
1 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

12 strips bacon, cooked crisp
2 large avocados, sliced
12 slices Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese

Lightly butter toasted muffin halves. Layer the following on muffins: about one tablespoon of alfalfa sprouts; one slice turkey breast; one slice bacon; 2-3 slices avocado and one slice cheese. Place under broiler until cheese melts or microwave on high for 15 seconds. Serve with dipping sauce. Garnish with fresh fruit.

Meatloaf Twirl

(serves 6)

Meat Mixture:
1-1/2 pounds ground beef
3/4 pounds ham, ground
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons minced parsley
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 egg

Stuffing:
4 English Muffins, ground (approx. 3 cups crumbs)
1/2 cup parmesan cheese
1/2 cup minced onions
2 tablespoons minced parsley
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/3 cup chicken stock or water
3 strips bacon

Sauce:
18 oz. can whole tomatoes, peeled
1 1/2 oz. can tomato sauce
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1 tablespoon olive oil

In large bowl, combine ground beef, ham, salt, pepper, parsley, nutmeg, and egg. Mix until well combined; reserve mixture. In another bowl, combine muffin crumbs, parmesan cheese, onions, parsley, thyme, salt, and pepper. Mix well. Add stock; stir well to moisten.

With water, sprinkle a sheet of aluminum foil. Spread meat mixture out to 9" x 13" size. Spread stuffing mixture over the meat, leaving a 1/2" border on all sides. Roll mixture up like a jelly roll, using the foil to guide. Seal ends and place in a buttered baking dish, seam side down. Place bacon strips on top. Bake in preheated oven at 350° for 1-1/2 hours. Remove from oven; let rest 15 minutes before carving. Serve with the following sauce:

Drain canned tomatoes and squeeze gently to remove juice. Chop pulp. Place in medium saucepan; add tomato sauce, basil, and olive oil. Simmer 1/2 hour. Yield 1-1/2 cups.

Eggs Benedict Variation

(serves 6)

6 English Muffins
12 eggs, poached
6 ounces thinly sliced ham cut into 12 slices
1 28-ounce can peeled tomatoes, drained and chopped (1-1/2 cups)
1/2 cup juice from canned tomatoes

1 tablespoon dehydrated minced onions
1 tablespoon butter
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon garlic salt
1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
Easy Blender Hollandaise Sauce
minced parsley

Toast muffins and keep warm. Poach eggs and drain. Drain tomatoes; reserve 1/2 cup liquid. In medium saucepan combine tomatoes, reserved juice, minced onions, butter, salt, garlic salt and ground black pepper. Simmer over medium high heat for fifteen minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from heat; keep warm. Make Easy Blender Hollandaise Sauce.



English muffin crumbs layered inside a fancy "Meatloaf Twirl" make a tasty dinner dish for family or friends.

EASY BLENDER HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

2 sticks butter
4 egg yolks
1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon water
salt
white pepper

Melt butter until bubbling. Remove from heat. In blender place egg yolks, lemon juice, water and salt and pepper to taste. Blend at high speed for 30 seconds. Open top of blender and slowly pour in hot butter in a thin stream. Hollandaise sauce will be thick and creamy.

To assemble:
Top each muffin half with a slice of ham. Then add 2 tablespoons of the tomato mixture. Make a well to hold egg. Place a poached egg on each half. Top with hollandaise sauce. Sprinkle with minced parsley. Serve with steamed broccoli.

French Toasted Muffins

(serves 6)

4 eggs
1/2 cup cream
2 tablespoons sugar

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
6 English Muffins
4 tablespoons butter

Beat together eggs, cream, sugar and vanilla extract. Place muffins, cut side down, in the egg mixture and soak for about one minute; turn over and dip other side to moisten. Stack muffins, cut side up, until ready to cook. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Place butter in sheet pan; put in oven to melt. When butter is bubbling, place muffins, cut side down, in pan and bake for 7 minutes or until cut side is brown. Turn over and bake 2-3 minutes more. Serve with butter and maple syrup or powdered sugar and preserves. Leftover slices can be refrigerated and then reheated in a toaster.

Chicken Melt

(serves 6)

6 English Muffins
4 cups cubed chicken meat
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup bottled French dressing
1/2 cup sliced almonds
salt and pepper to taste
12 slices canned pineapple
12 slices Swiss cheese

In small bowl, combine chicken and celery. Add mayonnaise, dressing, almonds, salt and pepper; mix well. Lightly toast and butter English muffins. Divide chicken mixture evenly among 12 muffin halves. Top each half with one pineapple ring, then one slice cheese. Broil or microwave on medium until cheese bubbles.