

Oatmeal Gives Waffles A Nutritious Boost

BY JACKIE BURRELL

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There are so many traditions associated with the new year — midnight kisses, shiny New Year’s resolutions and, of course, the guilt-laden, mid-January plunge into a pint of Ben and Jerry’s. That’s what happens when you go draconian on yourself.

But if the healthful hopes of Jan. 1 included such resolutions as “eat a healthy breakfast” and “more whole grains, baby,” here’s some happy news:

You can have your waffles and eat healthfully, too.

At least you can when you’ve packed them with toasted oatmeal, buttermilk and a hint of cinnamon.

Packed with antioxidants, high-fiber oatmeal fills you up, warms your soul and makes your heart (and other body parts) happier and healthier. Bake up a batch of berry-laced oatmeal, whip up a bowl of chai-spiced oats or dig into a jar of Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough’s Not-Just-Oatmeal Granola, and you’ll make your taste buds happy, too.

Health issues first prompted food writers Weinstein and Scarbrough’s efforts to incorporate more whole grains into their diets, but they soon discovered the delicious benefits of farro, freekeh, bulgur, oats and groats (the latter, they say, “taste like oatmeal squared.”) The beauty of whole grains for breakfast, Scarbrough writes in the duo’s new book, “Grain Mains” (Rodale Books, \$24.99, 232 pages), is that “lunchtime rolls around without a hunger pang in sight. We can’t think of better morning news than that.”

Their version of granola pumps up the nutritional volume by augmenting the usual oats with Kamut, wheat and barley flakes — which can be found in gourmet markets, health-food stores or online — as well as almonds, wheat germ and nonfat dry milk. The goal, Scarbrough says, is to “grain it up” — and by “it,” he means everything. Mix the crisp, crunchy results with milk for morning cereal, use it to top yogurt parfaits or nibble the granola as a hearty, healthy snack.

Warren Brown, a Washington, D.C. attorney-turned-baker and



MARK DUFRENE/CONTRA COSTA TIMES/MCT

You can keep a New Year’s resolution by eating healthy even when you have waffles. At least you can when you’ve packed them with toasted oatmeal, buttermilk and a hint of cinnamon.

proprietor of the very popular CakeLove bakeries in the D.C. area, does plenty of decadent sweets, of course, but he calls oatmeal the best way to “make the body feel nourished in all the right ways.”

His new breakfast cookbook, “CakeLove in the Morning” (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$24.95, 208 pages), offers everything from sticky buns — decidedly not resolution-fare — to chocolate pancakes (ditto). But Brown also shares his love for hot, creamy porridge, especially when the flavors are amplified with spices and fruit. He steeps traditional chai spices — cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom and star anise — in the milk he uses to cook oatmeal in one version, and mixes crystallized ginger, sliced bananas and flaxseeds into another.

As for those toasted oatmeal waffles, they’re the creation of San Francisco food writer and pastry chef Dawn Yanagihara, whose new book “Waffles” (Chronicle Books, \$16.95, 108 pages) is devoted to everything crisp, golden and pocked with those signature imprints.

Here, rolled oats are toasted first, an idea that a colleague at Cooks Illustrated magazine first came up with a decade ago to add a light nuttiness to your basic porridge. However, Yanagihara takes the concept much farther.

“You make these resolutions, but if the food doesn’t taste good, you won’t want to eat it,” she says. “I love oatmeal. It made sense to

do it — and I knew I needed to bring out the flavor. I pushed the envelope with the toasting to get that nutty, caramelized, butter-scotch-y flavor.”

Buttermilk is added to the still-warm oatmeal mixture, along with melted butter, eggs, flour and brown sugar, before the batter is baked in a waffle iron, forming a crisp exterior shell for the tender, custardlike interior.

OK, so melted butter and brown sugar aren’t exactly health foods. But a toasted-oatmeal waffle is much better for you than ice cream.

Just go easy on the syrup.

TOASTED OATMEAL WAFFLES

Makes 9 standard-size waffles

Note: If you’re watching your weight — or planning to add butter at the table — you can reduce the amount of butter in the batter.

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 cup quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1 3/4 cups water
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 3/4 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 large eggs, beaten

1. In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt 1 tablespoon butter. Add oatmeal; cook, stirring frequently for 8 to 10 minutes, or until browned with a deeply rich, toasty fragrance.

2. Off heat, carefully pour in water; mixture will steam and sputter. Bring mixture to a boil over high heat; lower heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until water is absorbed and oatmeal is

thick and creamy, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a bowl; stir in remaining butter and brown sugar, mixing well. Stir in buttermilk. Set aside to cool for 10 minutes.

- 3. Preheat your waffle iron.
- 4. Whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and baking soda.
- 5. Whisk beaten eggs into the oatmeal mixture. Pour oatmeal mixture into dry ingredients; fold gently with a rubber spatula just until batter is evenly moistened.

6. Pour a generous 1/2-cup batter into the center of the waffle iron. Use the spatula to spread the batter to about 1/2-inch from the edge. Close lid; bake the waffle to desired doneness. Repeat with remaining batter.

— Dawn Yanagihara, “Waffles: Sweet, Savory, Simple” (Chronicle Books, \$16.95, 108 pages)

BAKED OATMEAL

Serves 6 generously

- 2 cups rolled (not instant) oats
- 1/2 cup walnut pieces, toasted, divided
- 1/3 cup natural cane sugar or maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon aluminum-free baking powder

- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- Scant 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups milk
- 1 large egg
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly, divided

- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 ripe bananas, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

- 1 1/2 cups huckleberries, blueberries or mixed berries
- 1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Generously butter an 8-inch square baking dish.
- 2. In a bowl, mix together the oats, half of the walnuts, sugar (if using), baking powder, cinnamon and salt.
- 3. In another bowl, whisk together the maple syrup (if using), milk, egg, half of the butter and vanilla.
- 4. Arrange bananas in a single layer in prepared pan. Sprinkle with two-thirds of the berries. Cover with oat mixture. Drizzle with milk mixture. Scatter remaining berries and walnuts on top.
- 5. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the top is nicely golden and oat mixture has set. Let cool for a few minutes. Drizzle the remaining melted butter on top and serve with more sugar or maple syrup, if you wish.

— Heidi Swanson, “Super Natural Every Day” (Ten Speed Press, \$23, 248 pages)

WAY-MORE-THAN-JUST-OATS GRANOLA

Serves 16

Note: Find Kamut, wheat and barley flakes at specialty markets and health food stores.

- 2/3 cup almond oil
- 2/3 cup honey

- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 cup each Kamut, wheat and barley flakes

- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 3/4 cup instant nonfat dry milk
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup toasted wheat germ
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1. Position oven racks at top and bottom thirds of the oven. Preheat to 350 degrees.
- 2. In a saucepan over medium-low heat, stir oil, honey and vanilla until honey dissolves. Continue heating, stirring a few times, just until a few whiffs of steam come off the top. Set aside.
- 3. In a big bowl, mix the oats, Kamut, wheat and barley flakes, almonds, dry milk, sugar, wheat germ, cinnamon and salt. Pour in the oil mixture. Stir until everything’s moist. Spread the mixture into even layers on 2 large rimmed baking sheets.
- 4. Bake until crunchy and irresistible, about 20 minutes, stirring once halfway through baking. Cool on the sheets set on racks for at least an hour. Don’t mess with it as it cools. It will harden to a great crunch. Break the granola into bits, chips and flakes. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

— Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough, “Grain Mains” (Rodale Books, \$24.99, 232 pages)

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Season

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“We heard complaints that not everyone could make it that one weekend, so we’re bringing back that second weekend to give people the opportunity to come in,” Marlette said.

Other events the Dakota Theatre will host include a children’s theatre performance, as well as various fundraisers. Anyone interested in holding a fundraiser or other event at the theatre should contact Marlette at 605-665-4711, as available dates are limited.

Haddican said that along with adding to its schedule of events, the LCTC is also making upgrades to the theatre building, its sound system and the offerings at its snack bar for its new season.

“We’re always striving to improve,” he said.

The LCTC will be holding a fundraiser within the next few months for one of those improvements — the Dakota Theatre’s front facade.

“That’s something we really need the community to step up and help us on because we literally struggle day-to-day just to be able to put the shows on,” Marlette said. “The funding isn’t there for us to work on the front. And we know how tight money is for people, but we really feel that the Dakota Theatre and the Lewis and Clark Theatre Company bring something unique that not many communities the size of the Yankton have to offer. We want to preserve it and make sure it is there for the future.”

She added that the theatre can always use volunteers, as well, even if they can only spare a few hours.

“I think a lot of people are afraid to volunteer because they’re aware of how much work goes into a show, but it doesn’t have to be for that,” she said. “People can answer phones for a few hours, pop popcorn or sew. There are so many opportunities to help.”

“We always want new people to come in and experience what we do,” Haddican added. “That also goes for directors. What we find is that when you have the same director doing all the shows, it becomes stagnant and repetitious, and you really lose the community’s interest. We have a lot of new directors taking their shot this year, and those doors are always open.”

With all that the LCTC has to offer, Haddican said 2013 should be a great year.

“We look forward to a really exciting year with new faces, programs and shows, seriously showing the diversity that the theatre is capable of,” he said. “There’s something for everyone.”

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