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### **Pumpkin Cream Cheese Muffins**

*Makes 12 standard muffins*

These muffins are a fall favorite of ours that we look forward to making (and eating!) whenever autumn rolls around. They satisfy any craving for pumpkin spice and quell any hunger. Put these crowd-pleasing muffins on the menu for breakfast sometime during the long Thanksgiving weekend.

#### ***Muffin Batter Ingredients:***

2 cups all-purpose flour  
3/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger  
1-1/2 teaspoons salt  
1-1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 cup melted unsalted butter, cooled slightly  
3 large eggs  
1-1/2 cups canned pumpkin puree (1 can, 15-oz.)  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1-1/2 cups sugar

#### ***Cream Cheese Filling Ingredients:***

8 ounces cream cheese, softened  
1/2 cup powdered sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds or chopped pecans (optional)

#### ***Directions:***

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly grease each well of a 12-cup muffin pan, or line each well with a cupcake liner. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together the dry ingredients, (flour, spices, salt, and baking powder). In a larger bowl, mix together the liquid ingredients, (melted butter, eggs, pumpkin, and vanilla). Add the sugar and whisk to combine evenly.
3. Mix the cream cheese filling by combining the cream cheese, powdered sugar, and vanilla with in a small bowl with a hand mixer. Set aside.

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4. Mix the muffin batter by adding the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir until just combined; do not over mix. Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin tins evenly distributing the batter. With a spoon, make a slight well in the center of the batter in each cup. Add a spoonful of the cream cheese filling on top of each muffin. (Serve any leftover filling on the side when serving the hot muffins or save for a sweet topping on toasted bagels.) It will sink somewhat during baking and the muffin will rise and bake around the center of the filling. Top each muffin with a few pumpkin seeds or chopped pecans, if desired.

5. Bake for 16-18 minutes or until the muffin portion (not the filling) springs back from a finger touch, or until a toothpick in the muffin portion returns cleanly. Cool the muffins in the pan for 3-4 minutes before removing from the pan, then remove and place on cooling rack to finishing cooling, (or eat while still warm!).