

Cleo Coyle's Easy Chocolate Ricotta Muffins

With a mocha variation

Recipe text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband Marc Cerasini

Our readers might recall these muffins from our bestselling Coffeehouse Mystery [A Brew to a Kill](#). As the story opens, Greenwich Village coffeehouse manager Clare Cosi not only attempts to expand her business with a coffee and muffin truck, she also hires a sweet-natured dietician named Lilly Beth to help lighten some of the high calorie items on her menu. When Lilly is brutally struck by a hit-and-run driver, Clare's outrage propels her into tracking down the culprit, and Clare is once again sleuthing her way into and out of trouble. These chocolate muffins were a part of Lilly's menu makeover for Clare. Now I'm channeling Lilly with this bonus recipe for you. My "healthifying" process begins with ricotta cheese, which brings creamy moistness to the recipe along with protein and nutrition. To make these muffins even more healthful, you can...



Swap out part or all of the all-purpose flour for "white whole wheat" flour, which brings fiber to your snack table. Finally, while chocoholics may want to throw a fistful of chips into this batter, we enjoy these moist, chocolaty muffins as is or (even better) with a dollop of [Chocolate "Buttercream" Frosting, made without butter or cream](#). How would a culinary sleuth like Clare Cosi have made that frosting? With a mystery ingredient, of course. To see the recipe, [click here](#). Now for the muffins...

Makes 6 large muffins or 8 small

Ingredients

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|---|---|
| 1 large egg | 1/3 cup + 1 Tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder |
| 1/2 cup ricotta (<i>whole or part-skim</i>) | 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract |
| 1/2 cup light buttermilk (<i>shake up before measuring</i>) | 2 pinches of table salt |
| 3 Tablespoons neutral oil (<i>canola, vegetable, etc</i>) | 3/4 teaspoon baking powder |
| 1/4 cup granulated white sugar | 1/4 teaspoon baking soda |
| 1/4 cup light brown sugar | 1/2 cup + 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour |



*Free Recipe Guide to
Cleo's new culinary mystery
Shot in the Dark:
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Variation: For mocha muffins, add 1-1/2 teaspoons instant espresso where indicated below in Step 1. Instant espresso is freeze-dried espresso and not ground espresso roast beans. I use [this brand](#) (Medaglia D'oro), but you can use any.

Chocoholics: If you like, add semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips. Fold in 1/3 to 1/2 cup before baking (adjust amount to your own taste). You can even “go nuts” and add finely chopped hazelnuts or walnuts.

Step 1 – Make muffin batter with one-bowl mixing method:

Using a hand whisk or electric mixer, beat the egg until slightly frothy. Measure in the ricotta, light buttermilk, oil, white and light brown sugars, cocoa, vanilla extract, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. (If making mocha muffins, add your 1-1/2 tsp. of espresso powder now.) Whisk until fully blended. Measure in flour. At this stage, mix only enough to make a smooth batter. Do not over-mix or you'll develop the gluten in the flour and your muffins will be tough instead of tender.



Step 2 – Spray the papers: Line muffin cups with paper holders and spray the papers with non-stick spray. This is a low-fat recipe, so if you do not spray the papers, the muffins will stick.

Step 3 – Bake: This recipe makes about 1-3/4 cups of muffin batter. Distribute batter among six muffin cups for large muffins or eight muffin cups for smaller muffins.

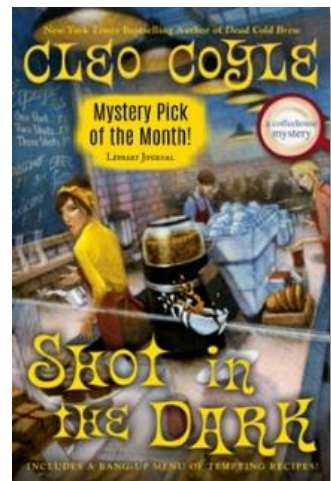
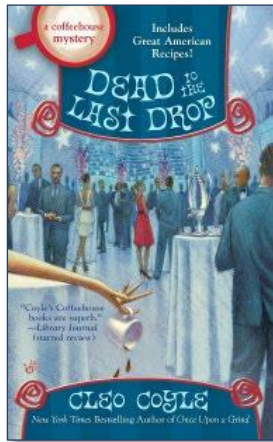
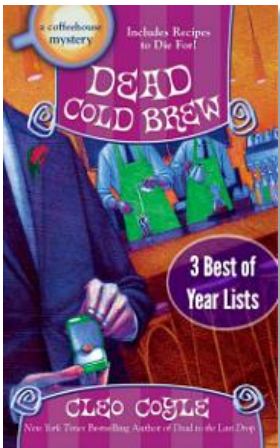
Bake in a preheated oven at 375° F. for about 20 minutes. Do not over-bake. Muffins are done when a toothpick inserted into a test muffin comes out clean (with no batter clinging to it). **TIP:** Muffins will be fragile when they come out of the hot oven. Allow them to cool in the pan for 10 minutes and transfer to a rack. If muffin edges are sticking to the paper, simply allow them to cool longer.



Optional: Frost cooled muffins with **Chocolate “Buttercream” Frosting (without butter or cream)**. Get our “mystery ingredient” recipe by [clicking here](#), and...

Eat with joy! —Cleo

The [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) are bestselling culinary mysteries, set in a landmark Greenwich Village coffeehouse. Each includes the added bonus of recipes. To learn more and see more recipes, visit Cleo Coyle’s online coffeehouse at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com And her recipe blog at www.CleoCoyleRecipes.com



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