

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

These little cakes from our Coffeehouse Mystery series are packed with big chocolate flavor! They're also one of our favorite guilt-free coffee break snacks. The reason is our "secret" ingredient: ricotta cheese. You will not taste the cheese in these muffins. You will only taste the chocolate. What the ricotta brings to these muffins is a beautiful creamy moistness, along with protein and nutrition (but without the added calories of more butter or oil). Trust us, this is a satisfying snack!



Finally, while chocoholics might throw a fistful of chips into this batter, we enjoy these tender, chocolaty muffins as is or with a dollop of [Chocolate "Buttercream" Frosting, made without butter or cream](#). How would a culinary sleuth like our beloved coffeehouse manager **Clare Cosi** make that frosting? With a mystery ingredient, of course! To see that recipe, [click here](#).



Makes 6 large muffins or 8 small

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup ricotta (*whole or part-skim*)
- 1/2 cup light buttermilk (*see substitution note**)
- 3 T. oil (*canola, vegetable, coconut, not olive!*)
- 1/4 cup granulated white sugar
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar, packed

- 1/3 cup + 1 T. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 pinches of table salt
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup + 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour

***Buttermilk substitute:** For best results, use light buttermilk in this recipe. To make a quick substitute, measure out 1T of lemon juice or white vinegar into a 1 cup container. Fill the rest of the cup with whole or 2% milk. Stir and allow the mix to sit on the counter for 10 minutes before using.

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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.

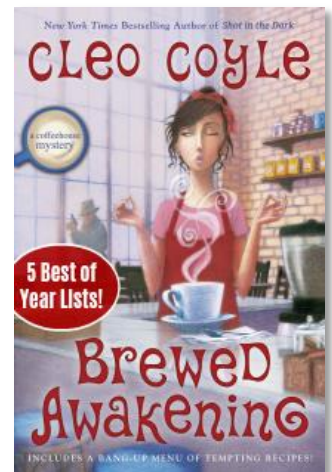
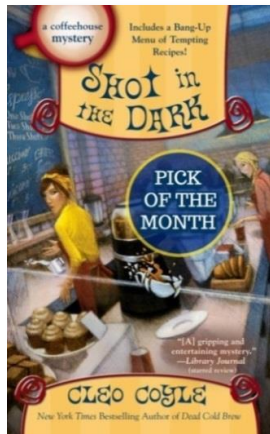
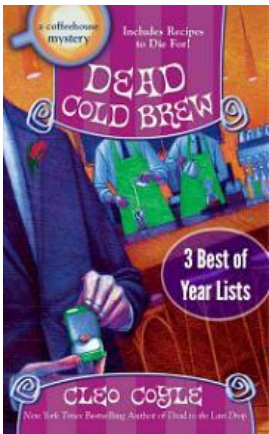


Optional: Frost cooled muffins with **Chocolate “Buttercream” Frosting (without butter or cream)**. Get our “mystery ingredient” recipe by [clicking here](#) and...

Eat with joy! ~ Cleo

The [Coffeeshouse Mysteries](#) are bestselling culinary mysteries, set in a landmark Greenwich Village coffeeshouse. Each includes the added bonus of recipes.

To learn more and see more recipes, visit Cleo Coyle’s online coffeeshouse at www.CoffeeshouseMystery.com And her recipe blog at www.CleoCoyleRecipes.com



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