

Gluten-Free Essentials Lemon Poppy Seed Bread & Muffin Mix (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Soy-Free)

Why do we love Gluten-Free Essentials? Let me count the reasons...gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free, soy-free, oh yes, and every product they make seems to be just plain delicious. Thus far in our trials of their many rice and baking mixes, not a single one has failed us. Luckily, their Lemon Poppy Seed mix is no exception.

To clear the air, I don't think I have ever purchased any bread, muffin, or the like that was poppy seed or lemon, let alone a combination of the two. I wouldn't call it an aversion, more a lack of interest.

With my sister's birthday upon us, I opened my cupboard to her eldest daughter. Though only ten years old, she loves to bake, and her eyes widened when she spied my collection of mixes. Yet, even with two cake mixes staring her straight in the face, she reached past them to grab the Lemon Poppy Seed Bread & Muffin Mix. "I love lemon!" she proclaimed. Not something I expected to hear from a ten year old, but who was I to argue. After secretly confirming that my sister was also a fan of lemon, we got to work.

As with several of the GF Essentials mixes, this one called for 1 stick of butter (we used Earth Balance Buttery Sticks), 2/3 cup applesauce (we used unsweetened), and 2 eggs. In addition 1/2 cup of liquid is needed, rice milk seemed to suit just fine. We lined each muffin cup, and filled them just 2/3 of the way full, for kid friendly sizing.

While the muffins were baking, we prepared the lemon glaze recipe as recommended on the package. It called for 1 cup powdered sugar, 1/2 stick of butter (Earth Balance once again), and 1/4 cup of lemon juice. As it turned out, I had a large lemon on hand, so we freshly squeezed our own juice, making only 3 Tablespoons before our lemon ran dry.

In less than twenty minutes, the muffins were ready. I instantly popped the picture perfect muffins onto a platter (I love silicone bake ware!). We immediately put another batch in for the baking. As it turned out, the single mix made 18 muffins! More than enough for our hungry bunch.

On the first muffin, we did a trial run of the glaze. It was way too lemony for both of our taste buds, so we opted to mellow it out by turning it into a frosting rather than a glaze. Simply put, we added more powdered sugar. Once it reached more of a spreadable texture, we both agreed upon the flavor. Granted, we had now converted the muffins to frosted cupcakes, but this did make them more birthday appropriate.

The muffins themselves were perfectly light, flaky, and amazingly "glutinous." The texture was a pure cake indulgence with a moderate amount of poppy seed speckling throughout. Sans frosting, the lemon flavor was fairly subdued. The gentle sweetness was influenced but not overpowered by the citrus notes. I found them quite enjoyable without any added glaze.

Yet, who can resist frosting? Once we spread on the citrus-spiked topper, some serious lemon essence from both the muffin and the frosting came bursting through. The match was an instant hit. My sister and the little baker loved them. The rest of us helped to ensure that this jumbo batch of muffins didn't go stale. By the next day, only two lone muffins remained. I took the almost empty platter as evidence of a success.

My Extra Notes & Tips:

- Though it is specifically called a "bread & muffin mix," they seem to have left off the specific muffin directions. We kept the temperature at the recommended 350°, and removed the muffins at about 18 minutes. They were not browned on the top (perhaps two to three more minutes for this), but perfectly baked through.

- Do not hesitate to serve these to friends and family, even if they don't follow a gluten-free diet. No one will detect a difference; trust me!

- As muffins or quick bread, this is the perfect accompaniment to afternoon tea, with or without the glaze.

Ingredients: Rice flour, sorghum flour, sugar, cornstarch, GF baking powder, guar gum, baking soda, poppy seeds, lemon juice powder, maltodextrin (from corn), salt.

- The people at GF Essentials have trialed various egg alternatives for those who would like an egg-free and/or vegan cookie. They recommend any of the following:

- Ener-g egg replacer

- 1/4 teaspoon of Guar Gum, 2 Teaspoon of Tapioca Starch and 1/2 teaspoon of oil.

- 1 1/2 tablespoon of oil- flaxseed or cooking oil and 1 teaspoon of Baking Powder.

- 1 teaspoon flax meal plus, 1/4 cup water = 1 egg.

Where to Purchase: All GF Essentials baking mixes can be purchased directly on the Gluten-Free Essentials Website.