

Stuffin' Muffins

SERVES 12

- 1/2 loaf** challah, cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
- 8 Tbs** butter (1 stick)
- 1 Tbs** sage
- 1 tsp** thyme
- 1 tsp** rosemary
- 4** stalks celery, diced
- 1** large sweet onion (about 1 1/2 cups) diced
- 1 clove** garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup** parsley, chopped fine
- 1 cup** turkey stock (or chicken stock)
- 1 tsp** salt
- 1/4 cup** half-and-half
- 2** eggs
- 1 tsp** kosher or sea salt

Heat oven to 250°. Place bread cubes in a single layer on a tray and bake for 15 minutes until the cubes are dried out but not browned, although if they begin to tan, that's fine. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.

Raise oven temperature to 350°.

In a measuring cup, add half-and-half and eggs and beat into a custard. Add to stock and combine; then add salt.

In a 12-inch saute pan, melt butter over medium heat until it foams. Sprinkle spices and allow to bloom for one minute. Add diced celery, onion and garlic and cook until softened but not browned, about 6 minutes. Add bread cubes and sauté until bread begins to brown and sticks to bottom, about 8



minutes. The bread will begin to break up. Distribute the parsley on top of the mixture. Pour stock mixture over bread and scrape up any bits from the bottom of the pan. As the mixture cooks, it will begin to resemble a bread pudding, with some chunks of bread. Take off heat.

Spray muffin tins generously with cooking spray. Fill tins with stuffing mixture, gently compressing and just mounding over the top. Sprinkle a little kosher or sea salt on the top of each muffin. Place in middle rack in the oven and bake for 20 minutes. Turn on broiler, and toast the top of the muffins until they turn a dark brown, about 2 minutes. Be careful not to burn the muffin tops.

Run a knife around each muffin and scoop them out. Serve immediately, or hold in a warm oven.

THE REAL SMELL OF THANKSGIVING ISN'T TURKEY ROASTING, IT'S STUFFING BEING MADE. Everyone loves stuffing from the bird, but most turkey gurus recommend **NOT** filling the cavity. Stuffing (or more accurately, "dressing") baked in a casserole is often dry. This recipe answers two problems—making a decent out-of-bird stuffing and portion control.

These muffins are not low-fat or good for you in any way except for savory deliciousness, so having them in convenient portions helps avoid overindulgence. This stuffing is a combo of stuffing and bread pudding, with eggs and cream helping bind the bread and keeping it moist.

REALLY KICKING THIS RECIPE REQUIRES A RICH HOMEMADE TURKEY STOCK. Although Swanson's chicken stock works, adding a packet of their flavor boost concentrate helps. For more money, Williams-Sonoma sells turkey stock concentrate that works very well.

IF YOU LIKE YOUR DRESSING LESS DRY AND MORE IN-THE-BIRD-LIKE, bake these muffins in a water bath. Fill a baking dish with enough water to submerge the muffin tins one-third deep, and only the tops will be crunchy.