

BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Snowdrops overrules calendar’s claims of winter’s persistence

Winter may only be half over, but I’m not fooled into thinking it will last much longer because the snowdrops are blooming at my parents’ house.

The snowdrops have ancient knowledge that predates written history. They know when they are to bloom in the rhythm of the seasons.

You know, I always preferred daffodils, but the snowdrop (*Galanthus*) is special because it is a very early sign that spring is on its way. Soon we’ll see buttercups, bluets, and baby blue eyes, then daffodils, lamb’s tongues (trout lilies or *erythronium*) and violets.

Leaves that didn’t get raked last fall were still in good enough shape to be rolled into clay for a pottery project — quite to my delight.

Between rain showers or sprinkles, the condition of things in the landscape can be checked periodically during the winter to make sure problems are not occurring.

Check the level of seed in bird feeders and top them up between storms so the birds have a source of food (and water, if you are able to provide that for them).

If there is not adequate rainfall, trees can be watered during the winter, as they can dry out.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

Recipes To Help People Stay With The Keto Diet



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Keto breaded chicken cutlets.

KEEPING ON KETO

By Daniel Neman
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

My friends Mike and Robin have been on the keto diet for a couple of years. They lost a ton of weight, and they look fit and trim — better than I’ve ever seen them, and I’ve known them more than 30 years.

Their results are not unusual. The keto diet often leads to rapid weight loss.

The trick lies in keeping it off. Mike and Robin have done it well, but a lot of people can’t. And therein lies a problem, according to Jennifer McDaniel, a registered dietitian and the owner of McDaniel Nutrition Therapy in St. Louis.

“While you might gain benefits in the

short term just like any other restrictive diet, most people — like, 90% of the people — have trouble staying on it. When they lose the weight and they can’t maintain the weight that they attained, that’s just another failed diet,” she said.

The keto diet is a high-fat, low-carbohydrates diet — “it’s like the Atkins diet on steroids,” McDaniel said. People on the diet strive to consume 70% to 80% of their calories through fats, as little as 5% through carbohydrates and the rest through protein.

This helps us lose weight because it forces our bodies to burn fat for energy instead of its preferred fuel, carbohydrates.

McDaniel recommends that her clients not go on the keto diet. The diet changes the microbiome in their bodies (the bacteria, fungi and more that live inside us). It is difficult for people on the diet to consume enough fiber, which can lead to constipation and other gastrointestinal nastiness. And because carbohydrates hold onto water, people on the diet are often dehydrated, she said.

And yet, as Mike and Robin and thousands of others can attest, it works. So I decided to try a few recipes to see how they tasted.

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Baking mix lets you handle cooking emergencies

By Robin Mather
Chicago Tribune

If your morning routine includes a coffee shop stop to grab joe and a muffin, you need this story.

If your dinner menu’s looking a little uninspired, you also need this story.

We have a way for you to have your muffin and eat it, too — any time of day, any way you want it. It’ll help your wallet, too. Whether you want sweet, chockablock with fruit and nuts, or savory, redolent with cheese and chiles or other savory ingredients, this baking mix lets you have muffins in minutes.

The baking mix is also a boon to have on hand for last-minute baking tasks, such as when your child informs you at 9 p.m. that tomorrow is her day to take a treat, or when friends pop by unexpectedly.

Store the mix at room temperature and make up a batch whenever you have a few minutes. Then freeze the cooled muffins in individual portions for quick grab-and-go snacks. It’s better to freeze the baked muffins than to freeze the batter.

Having the mix on hand allows for easy improvisation. Add a little vanilla to the batter if you’re going for sweet muffins. Top the muffins before baking with a simple streusel of 3 tablespoons flour, 3 tablespoons brown sugar and 2 tablespoons softened butter, if you like. Or, while the muffins bake, you may wish to make a simple glaze or icing from powdered sugar, milk and vanilla to gild them when they’ve cooled.

Some sweet add-in combinations that I especially like include:

¾ cup toasted coconut + ¾ cup diced pineapple + 1 tablespoon rum extract

¾ cup diced apple or pear + ¾ cup chopped dates

1 cup peanut butter chips + ¼ cup powdered peanut butter + ¼ cup cocoa

¾ cup mashed banana + ½ cup chopped walnuts

1 cup mashed pumpkin or butternut squash + 2 teaspoons cinnamon + 1 teaspoon each of nutmeg and ginger

1 cup fresh blueberries (toss these with the dry ingredients so they won’t sink to the bottom of the muffins) + 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest



Abel Uribe / ChicagoTribune-TNS

The baking mix is a boon to have on hand for last-minute baking tasks, such as when your child informs you at 9 p.m. that tomorrow is her day to bring a treat, or when friends pop by unexpectedly.

On the other side of the fence, savory muffins match up well with simple suppers of soup, stew or chili. Some savory add-in combinations that have pleased me include:

1 cup fresh or thawed frozen corn kernels + ½ cup shredded cheddar + ¼ cup diced roasted chiles OR 1 tablespoon chili powder + 2 teaspoons cumin

1 cup diced brie (with rind removed) + ½ cup chopped walnuts

1 cup thawed frozen chopped spinach + ½ cup crumbled feta + 2 teaspoons dried oregano + 1 teaspoon dried rosemary

¾ cup diced ham + ¾ cup diced Swiss or Emmentaler cheese + 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

¾ cup crumbled blue cheese + ¾ cup cooked, crumbled bacon + 2 teaspoons sage

½ cup pesto + ¾ cup pine nuts + ½ cup grated Parmesan (sprinkle some of the cheese on top before baking)

MULTIPLE MUFFIN MIX

Prep: 30 minutes
Bake: 28-31 minutes
Makes: 4 batches, or about 36 large or 48 small muffins

Keep this mix on hand for easy muffins in a jiffy. After mixing the ingredients, divide the batch into recipe-sized portions and store in 1 quart canning jars or zip-close quart bags. It keeps perfectly well at room temperature for several months. Whisk the dry ingredients for each batch to be sure they’re well blended. The baking temperature instructions are a little unusual: If you put the muffins into a hot oven for a short time, they rise higher and look better. Then reducing the temp lets them continue to cook through.

Baking mix:
7 cups all-purpose flour, spooned into

measuring cup and leveled
1 cup whole-wheat flour or commeal, spooned into measuring cup and leveled
3 cups sugar: any combination of firmly packed brown sugar OR white sugar
3 tablespoons baking powder
2 teaspoons salt

For each batch of 12 regular or six large muffins:
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1 cup milk
½ cup oil: melted coconut oil, canola oil OR vegetable oil
2 teaspoons vanilla, for sweet muffins (optional)
2 ¾ cup baking mix (above)
Add-ins: up to 1½ cups any combination of fruit, vegetables, grated or diced cheese, baking chips, nuts or toasted coconut

1. Make the baking mix: In a large bowl, whisk together flours, sugar, baking powder and salt. Combine thoroughly and portion for storage.
2. At baking time, heat the oven to 400 degrees. Line the cavities of a muffin pan with paper liners.
3. Combine egg, milk and oil in a large bowl. Whisk to combine well. Add baking mix and your choice of add-ins; combine with 15 to 20 strokes. There will still be streaks of white showing and the batter will be lumpy. Do not overmix.
4. Fill the muffin cups three-quarters full with the batter. Bake, 10 minutes. Then reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean, 8 to 11 minutes more for regular-sized muffins, or 15 to 20 minutes more for large muffins.
5. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes before transferring muffins to a rack to finish cooling.
6. Once cool, the muffins can be individually frozen on a baking pan before transferring to zip-close bags for longer storage, up to 3 months. Thaw by microwaving for about a minute or allow them to thaw naturally at room temperature.

Nutrition information per serving: 221 calories, 10 g fat, 8 g saturated fat, 17 mg cholesterol, 30 g carbohydrates, 14 g sugar, 3 g protein, 204 mg sodium, 1 g fiber