



Carrot Soup with Smoked Cheddar 'n Chive Mini Muffins

3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
1 large shallot, peeled, minced
1 pound fresh carrots, peel if desired, sliced ½ inch
4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt; 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup heavy or light cream

Caramelized Brussels Sprouts Topping

4 slices Prosciutto
12 Brussels sprouts, halved, sliced thinly
3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
6 Tablespoons chopped onion
4 Tablespoons fresh minced chives

Smoked Cheddar 'n Chive Mini Muffins

1 cups all purpose flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. sweet paprika
1 egg
1/2 cup plain yogurt
1/3 cup milk

1/4 cup shredded smoked cheddar cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup olive oil
1/8 cup minced fresh chives

Prepare Carrot Soup: Place butter in hot medium sized soup pot; melt butter over medium heat. Add minced shallot; cook about 1 minute; stir in sliced carrots; cook about 4 to 5 minutes. Add broth, paprika, cumin, salt, and black pepper; bring to boil. Reduce heat to simmer; cook for 15 minutes or until carrots are tender. Let cool.

Using blender, pulse tender carrots and liquid until smooth. Return to soup pot; stir in cream. Cook over medium heat just until warm. Taste; adjust seasoning as desired. Set aside to stay warm.

Prepare Brussels Sprouts Topping: Place Prosciutto slices in hot nonstick skillet; cook over medium heat until warm and crisp. Remove, cool, and chop into pieces. Place butter in skillet to melt; add onion and sliced Brussels sprouts; cook, stirring often to lightly caramelize sprouts; remove from heat; stir in cooked Prosciutto bits and minced chives; set aside.

To Serve Soup: Spoon warm carrot soup into individual soup bowls; place dollop of Brussels Sprouts Topping in center; serve with about 3 mini smoked cheddar 'n chives mini-muffins. Serve remaining Topping on the side as a stir-in if desired.

Serves: about 6

Prepare Mini Muffins. In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, and paprika.

In a separate bowl, combine egg, yogurt, milk, cheddar cheese, parmesan cheese and oil. Slowly add wet ingredients to dry ingredients, stirring until smooth and well combined. Stir in chives.

Using 1/2 Tablespoon scooper, place batter into prepared mini muffin pan cups. Bake in 375 degree F oven for about 20 minutes or until golden and test done. Remove from oven; set aside to cool in pan for 5 minutes; then turn out onto wire rack to cool completely. If desired, brush tops of mini muffins lightly with melted butter.

Yield: about 2 to 2-1/2 dozen mini muffins

Ladle warm soup into serving bowls; garnish with chives. Serve with muffins alongside.

Yield: about 12 mini muffins and serving soup 4

Inspired by: "The Spice & Herb Bible" Third Edition Ian Hemphill with recipes by Kate Hemphill

Cook's Note: Prepare the mini muffins before you make the soup; just keep them warm. Extra spices can be added if you enjoy a more flavorful soup. Some suggestions include grated fresh ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, or a touch of curry powder.

About this Recipe: Fresh tender carrots bubble into a smooth warm cream soup, flavored with a touch of smoked paprika and cumin. Swirl in some caramelized Brussels sprouts topping and serve them with delicious smoked cheddar and chive mini-muffins. It's a beautiful light lunch.