

SEALED WITH A KISS MUFFINS

The best Valentine's Day surprises aren't the ones you buy, they're the ones you make. This February 14th, bake a batch of these strawberry muffins with a surprise center--chocolate, candy, jam -- whatever your Valentine would like best.



INGREDIENTS

6 tbsp. butter
3/4 cup sugar
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
14 strawberries, fresh or defrosted frozen
Food coloring, optional

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp. salt
1 tbsp. baking powder
Hershey's Kisses, Hugs or strawberry jam

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar. You can do this with a wooden spoon, a potato masher or a handheld electric mixer. Mix in the eggs, one at a time, and add the milk.
2. Rinse the strawberries and cut off the greens with a plastic knife (a fun job for three- to five-year-olds who are accustomed to cutting play dough).

3. Mash the berries with a potato masher or puree in a blender. Then stir the berries into the butter and milk mixture.

4. In a separate bowl, ask the chef to sift the flour, salt and baking powder. Stir well.

5. Add the flour mixture to the berry mixture. Use a wooden spoon to stir until all the white disappears.

6. Line the muffin tin with paper liners. Drop the batter from a tablespoon to fill the cups halfway.

7. Add a surprise: an unwrapped Kiss, Hug or 1/2 teaspoon of jam. Then spoon more batter to fill almost to the top. Bake until the muffins begin to brown and a toothpick inserted near the center (but not in the Kiss) comes out clean, about 20 to 25 minutes.

8. Remove the muffins from the tin and cool. Serve them warm in a basket lined with a red napkin or on plates with doilies. Makes 12 muffins. Happy Valentine's Day!