

ENLIGHTENED TREATING



Story by **Erin Breton**
Photos by **Deb Fletcher**

Superfood cookie snack bites
dipped in white, milk
and dark chocolate

TEN YEARS AGO, A MUFFIN MERELY SEEMED LIKE AN EASY, ON-THE-GO BREAKFAST OPTION TO MANY CONSUMERS. BUT IN THE AGE OF **ENLIGHTENED EATING**, SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A MUFFIN CAN SERVE AS A HELPFUL SOURCE OF PROTEIN, FIBER, VITAMINS AND OTHER NUTRIENTS.

The demand for food with inherent benefits is growing: In 2017, three-quarters of consumers said they tried to eat more protein or are interested in doing so, according to Mintel. Separate research from Information Resources found 60 percent of consumers want snacks that deliver additional benefits beyond nutrition, such as antioxidants, and 59 percent want snacks with vitamins and minerals.

This trend presents a unique opportunity for bakeries: By using ingredients ranging from protein-rich nuts to probiotic-packed Greek yogurt in products, bakeries can satisfy consumers' dual desire for taste and nutritional advantages.

In fact, the rising popularity of healthy baked goods is expected to help the global bakery products market reach \$570 billion by 2024, according to Global Industry Analysts.

Although some people look for or avoid specific ingredients because of dietary restrictions or food allergies, many choose enlightened items for their health value, according to Jennifer LaPaugh, senior director, global market research and insights at Dawn Foods.

"Consumers are proactively seeking inherent benefits from food, like protein that helps build muscle or probiotics that contribute to healthy digestion—they're using food to fuel their bodies," LaPaugh says. "They want to enjoy the foods they eat and feel good about them. Bakers can meet this need by using a recipe that has a base of something a bit better and then adding in the extra ingredients."

Enlightened Eaters: No Longer a Niche

Many bakeries are already capitalizing on this trend—and seeing great success. In 1999, Stephen Charles Lincoln came up with the idea for protein-packed baked goods as he was standing in a coffee shop, looking at the store's display case.

"I had lost 82 pounds and was working as a fitness instructor but still had a sweet tooth," Lincoln says. "I saw the cookies and blondies selling like crazy and thought, 'Why can't you make it healthier?'"

So he did. Lincoln launched the Protein Bakery in New York, selling cookies, brownies and other sweets made with whey protein concentrate. The concept resonates with people from all walks of life who understand the benefit of protein but still want a cookie, according to Lincoln.

Some bakers have sought to cater to niche dietary restrictions only to find their products also appeal to a much broader audience.

That was the case for Anne Hoyt. In 2010, after figuring out how to make gluten-free versions of her favorite recipes for her daughter, who had been diagnosed with celiac disease, Hoyt opened Unrefined Bakery in Dallas. The bakery sells a variety of health-minded fare, from bread made with rice, sorghum and quinoa flour blends to cupcakes made with coconut



Puffed quinoa
crunch
brownie bars

Superfood Bread

Katherine Simpson,
Applications Chef, Dawn Foods

- 2 pounds Dawn RichCreme Cake Base
- 1.5 tablespoons cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- 11.2 ounces eggs
- 9.6 ounces neutral oil
- 24.9 ounces superfoods, such as avocado, pomegranate seeds, shredded carrots, coconut flakes, apple chunks, dried mango banana chips, dried apricots, dried blueberries, dried cranberries, oats, almonds, pecans, pistachio walnuts, flaxseed, hemp seed, sunflower seeds, quinoa and chia seeds

Using a standing mixer, combine cake mix, cinnamon, turmeric and eggs. Mix for 1 minute on low speed and 3 minutes on medium speed. Add oil and 7.2 ounces of water, and mix for 1 minute on low speed. Scrape the sides of the bowl, and mix for 3 minutes on low speed. Fold all superfoods into batter. Working in 12-ounce batches, deposit batter into 7 mini loaf pans. Bake loaves at 350 F for 45 minutes. Yields 7 mini bread loaves





Matcha white chocolate bark with coconut flakes and freeze-dried raspberries

milk. Although some of Unrefined's customers have allergies, Hoyt estimates roughly half buy her products for the taste or their healthy attributes.

Similarly, a personal dietary restriction was the inspiration behind Cindy Kollar's Smart Cookie Baker in Elgin, Illinois. Kollar lives with Type 1 diabetes and follows a doctor-recommended low-carb diet. She uses ingredients like coconut oil, almond and flaxseed meal in her muffins, cookies, breads and other baked goods.

Kollar initially assumed her customers would be individuals with similar dietary restrictions. However, friends started recommending her goods to people interested in healthy eating.

Understanding Emerging Eating Habits

Most enlightened eaters regularly monitor new health trends, whether it's a superfood known to soften hair or a diet that boosts energy.

Since Kollar has found many customers are looking for food that delivers more than one health benefit, she recommends bakeries test items that fulfill two or more dietary needs.

"There's a combination of people who are keto and gluten-free, or gluten-free and vegan, or they tend to do paleo and gluten-free," she says. "Some of it is inherent in the eating mindset; a lot of times, there are multiple things they're looking for."

While it can be difficult for bakers to track emerging diets and trending ingredients, it's

STAR SUPERFOODS

Not sure which healthy ingredients to start incorporating into your baked goods? Consider these suggestions.

Greek yogurt: Packed with protein, calcium and probiotics, Greek yogurt can stand in for fats like sour cream.

Fruits and vegetables: Go beyond the standard blueberry, lemon and sweet potato with unique flavors like pomegranate, dates and purple yams.

Nuts and seeds: Add good fats and protein, as well as rich taste and texture, with walnuts and chia and sunflower seeds.

important that they know what matters most to their customers.

Hoyt attributes Unrefined's growth over the past eight years to the way the bakery carefully listens to customer feedback and requests.

"Over time, we've learned from our customers, and we've changed a lot, depending on what they ask us for and need," she says.

This level of attention has drawn in customers, and those customers' word-of-mouth recommendations helped fuel more growth.

Enlightening Your Baked Goods

Hoyt has found adding paleo, keto and vegan items to the menu requires recipe adjustments to maintain products' consistency and taste.

"There was a lot to learn," Hoyt says. "We got really good at understanding what does what. We use tapioca in one of our paleo breads; it lifts better because of the starch—it's a root, not a grain, so you can use it. Small gluten-free items like buns and rolls don't need eggs, but in bread, we needed it to help hold it when it rose."

Other elements can also affect consistency on a day-to-day basis, according to Hoyt. "The weather matters, the moisture in the air; the balance between water and xanthan gum is super tricky," she says.

Still, some baked goods are easier to enlighten than others, LaPaugh says.

"Muffins tend to be a very good carrier; ingredients can be blended into the batter or added in, or yogurt can be used as a filling," she says. "Make sure you have a batter that has a great suspension; the last thing you want is to have all the good things you've added fall to the bottom."

Keep Your Operations Healthy

Because healthier baking substitutions and inclusions can be more costly than traditional ingredients, enlightened items' price points often need to be higher. With the right messaging, this shouldn't be an issue with customers, LaPaugh says.

"Consumers are typically willing to pay more for enlightened items, as they understand there is an added health benefit," she says. "We've seen bakeries have success by offering these items at the same price point in a smaller-size offering. This has the added benefit for consumers of a 'lighter' version treat for the same cost they are used to paying."

In addition to displaying enlightened items in a visibly distinctive place, use their healthy ingredients as a noticeable garnish. For example, top breakfast bars made with nuts and seeds with a sprinkle of more nuts and seeds.

It's also important to communicate products' healthy components with clear, eye-catching in-store signage.

"A few key terms that a baker could consider would be 'fuel,' 'natural' and 'protein,'" LaPaugh says. "Noting the specific benefit of an ingredient is important, as well."

With the right understanding of who enlightened eaters are and what they're looking for, bakers can capitalize on evolving health trends.

Erin Breton is a freelance writer in Chicago.