

## Enjoy the soothing scent of baked apples in these delicious buttermilk muffins



Buttermilk Apple Muffins

Photos Susie Iventosch

### By Susie Iventosch

This is another one of those recipes that a friend gave me years ago, and it has sat in my to-do pile for probably the past 15 years or so. Yikes. Sometimes you just need a bit of motivation to pull out the mimeographed pages and start whipping up recipes. I had exactly that just recently with a house full of guests for the New Year's holiday

weekend.

The recipe is from a page in a cookbook that I don't have, but from my friend's hand-written note, it seems to be from Bishop's Pumpkin Farm in Sheridan, Calif., which is right next to Wheatland. This makes me think the recipe dates back to when our kids were going on Halloween field trips in the early 1990s. The pumpkin farm is closed until next fall, but this recipe will tide you over until you

can get there to sample Mrs. B's baked goods, which if this recipe is any indication, are amazing!

What I love about these muffins is how light they are and the fresh apple is so good. We added an extra half cup of chopped apples, plus our own oil-based crumb top-

ping, which we love on these delicious muffins. The recipe only makes 12 regular muffins, so I've already made a second batch inside of two days. I haven't yet doubled the recipe, but I should think that would work just fine. If you try it, let me know how it goes.

You can use your favorite baking apples for this recipe, as none are specified, but I used Honeycrisp and they are really good in the muffins. Also, I like to double this crumb topping recipe and store it in the refrigerator, so when I want to make muffins again, that step is done!

### Buttermilk Apple Muffins

#### INGREDIENTS

##### Muffins

3/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
1/3 cup vegetable oil (I used canola)  
1 egg, beaten  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 tsp. baking soda  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. nutmeg  
1 1/2 cups peeled and coarsely chopped apples (I used Honeycrisp)  
1/2 cup buttermilk

##### Crumb Topping

1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup light brown sugar  
1/4 tsp. cinnamon  
1/8 tsp. cardamom  
1/8 tsp. all-spice  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/4 cup chopped toasted walnuts (or pecans)  
2 tablespoons canola oil

#### DIRECTIONS

##### Crumb Topping

Prepare crumb topping in advance so you are ready to top the muffins as soon as the batter is ready. To make the topping, simply combine all dries and mix well. Stir the oil in with a fork and mix until crumbly. Set aside. If you decide to double the topping recipe, just store the extra in an airtight container in the refrigerator until ready to use.

##### Muffins

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a muffin tin with muffin liners. Lightly spray the inside of the liners with cooking spray. (This makes it so much easier to peel the liner away from the muffin when you are hungry!)

In a mixing bowl, combine brown sugar, oil, egg and vanilla and blend well with a fork or whisk. Add flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg, and mix well with a wooden spoon. Stir in apples and buttermilk to combine with the other ingredients.

Distribute the batter into the prepared muffin tins. Then divide the crumb topping evenly over the top of each muffin.

Bake for 18-20 minutes, or until the center of the muffin springs back when touched with your finger. Remove from oven and serve warm or cool and freeze or refrigerate until later.



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## 'My Sailor, My Love,' a lesson in forgiveness and compassion for human frailty



Photo provided

### By Sophie Braccini

An old man who hides his decrepitude, a daughter burdened by resentment, an older woman who wants to believe in love and acceptance touch each others' lives in the intriguing and poignant Swedish/Irish film, "My Sailor, My Love" opening in Orinda on Jan. 20.

Howard is a retired sea captain and a widower. His life may have been rough, but he has obviously protected himself with a heavy layer of selfishness. His daughter feels she was never seen and loved by the old man she is now visiting frequently while grudgingly trying to manage his life. She hires a maid, Annie, to take care of her father's house. The

charming older woman soon tames the grumpy old man and a romance slowly develops. But this is not to the daughter's liking who has different plans for her father.

Swedish director Klaus Härö wanted to tell a love story that is not a first love, but something happening much later on in life. To do so he chose experienced theater actors who could give the film its subtlety and make it believable to the audience. The cast is top notch.

Each character is well developed and brings something quite unique and complex to the story. The old captain is hiding his inevitable physical and mental decay. His long and rough sea life has transformed the young man in love with his wife he once was. He talks about it with his daughter: "It gets harder and harder to come home, and one day

there is no grace at the gate." Grace happens to also be the name of his daughter. The dead mother's shadow is in the picture. She haunts her daughter and is part of what feed her unresolved grievances. She is hard on herself, she lacks grace in her life. The film dives into a topic that is not easily addressed on the silver screen, how a man has lost the love of his daughter, without anything terribly egregious hidden in their past, and how to live with this loss when mending cannot be performed.

Howard is hard and unreachable to his daughter, but to Annie he is showing his better side and is generous. The director exposes with sensitivity the different sides of human beings. These characters have flaws, these characters have great qualities. The human equation shown here is complex and endearing. Annie

holds one of the keys of the movie when she explains to Grace how she can love her father: because she takes him as he is. She has no demand, no expectation, no grievance, and first and foremost, she does not judge. And this is maybe why, in spite of former mistakes, in spite of a heavy past, in a space of deep acceptance love is still possible.

Even at the end of the movie, the characters' ambiguities and their dark, irreducible parts will not be completely lightened. It is like an Irish sky, with heavy gray clouds that can feel weighty at times but that nonetheless wrap us up in their unspeakable charm.

The movie is brought to Lamorinda for at least a week by the International Film Showcase. It will open on Jan. 20 at the Orinda Theatre. Tickets at [orindamovies.com](http://orindamovies.com).

## Ukrainian-Canadian artist's paintings to be featured at Lafayette's Town Hall Theatre Gallery



Photos provided

### Submitted by Jenny Rosen

The city of Lafayette's Public Art Committee has selected "Movement," a collection of

paintings inspired by the Avant Garde movement in Kyiv by local Ukrainian-Canadian artist

Yana Verba, for exhibit at the Town Hall Theatre Gallery in Lafayette. The exhibition runs Jan. 19 through March 5. There will be a free opening reception Sunday, Jan. 29, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Gallery (3535 School Street in Lafayette). Verba will present an artist talk and a new site-specific chalk installation referencing the massacre at the Donetsk Regional Academic Drama Theater in Mariupol beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Born in Ukraine and immigrating to Canada in 1999, Verba studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York and received a BFA from Ontario College of Art & Design University in Toronto. She grounds her art practice in a language of abstraction, using rhythmic patterns, colors, and movement. Informed by Modernists of the early 20th century, Verba presents a series of paintings inspired by Ukrainian artist and stage designer Vadym Meller's costume

sketches created between 1919-1921 for Bronislava Nijinska's "School of Movement" dance school in Kyiv.

Verba encourages viewers to look back a hundred years ago when, despite the Ukrainian-Soviet War, Kyiv was the Ukrainian capital of arts, theater, and literature. "By looking back in time, I hope the viewer can make a connection to our time, when Ukraine is fighting the Russian invasion that is trying to erase the Ukrainian people. Our culture, our songs, our spirit, and our love for life and freedom will never be erased. People are singing Ukrainian folk songs while sheltering from bombs in the Kyiv subway. Ukrainian youth are getting together to dance, clean up the ruins, and restore communities. Although the war has forced people to move the theatre into the bunkers, Ukrainian arts are still thriving."