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Week 25: **fruity, nutty harvest cupcakes from cupcakes!** by Elinor Klivans

"Pecans, walnuts, almonds, apricots, dates, and cranberries make these cupcakes a celebration of the fall harvest that can carry you right through winter. With the brown sugar batter loaded with 3 cups of fruit and nuts, and even more of them garnishing the butter rum frosting, there is probably more fruit and nuts in these cupcakes than cake."

This is a long ingredient list, but they are all easily found supermarket items and many may already (or are very nice to have) on hand. These cupcakes are good "keepers," so making a double recipe is not a bad idea. New crops of nuts appear in the supermarket beginning in October and throughout the fall. This is a good time to stock up on a year's supply to store in the freezer. Be sure to defrost the nuts before using them in the recipe, or they will chill the batter and affect the baking time.

Makes 12 regular cupcakes

1-1/3 cups unbleached AP flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp salt
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1/2 stick unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
2/3 cup packed lgt brown sugar
1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 tbl rum, preferably dark
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 cup finely chopped pecans
1/2 cup finely chopped walnut
1/4 cup coarsely chopped unblanched almonds
3/4 cup dried apricots, cut into small pieces
1/2 cup dried cranberries
1/2 cup chopped dates

Make the cupcakes. Position a rack in the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Line the tin cups with paper cupcake liners. Spray the inside of each liner with nonstick cooking spray.

Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and cinnamon into a medium bowl and set aside. In a large bowl, using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar until smoothly blended and lightened in color, about 2 minutes. Stop the mixer and scrape the sides of the bowl as needed during mixing. Beat in the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in the rum and vanilla. On low speed, mix in the flour mixture just until it is incorporated. Stir in the pecans, walnuts, almonds, apricots, cranberries, and dates. The batter will be thick.

Fill each paper liner with a generous 1/3 cup of batter, to about 1/8 inch below the top of the liner. Bake just until

the tops feel firm and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 35 minutes. Cool the cupcakes for 10 minutes in the pan on a wire rack.

Carefully place the wire rack on top of the cupcakes in their pan. Protecting your hands with potholders and holding the pan and rack together, invert them to release the cupcakes onto the wire rack. Turn the cupcakes top side up to cool completely.

Frosting

6 tbl unsalted butter, at room temperature
1-1/2 cups powdered sugar
1 tbl rum, preferably dark
1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1/3 cup mixed chopped nuts, dried apricots, and dried cranberries for topping

Make the frosting. In a large bowl, using an electric mixer on low speed, beat the butter and powdered sugar until blended but still crumbly. Add the rum and vanilla and beat until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. The frosting will be thick.

Use a small metal spatula to spread about 1-1/2 tbl of frosting over the top of each cupcake, then spoon about 1-1/2 tsp of the mixed fruit and nuts over the top.

The cupcakes can be covered and stored at room temperature for up to 4 days.

The frosting can be omitted and the cupcakes finished with a dusting of powdered sugar.