

Dark chocolate cupcakes

Ingredients

- 1 cup (140g/5oz) plain flour
- ¼ cup (30g/1oz) unsweetened good-quality cocoa powder
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ cup (60g/2¼oz) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup (225g/8oz) granulated sugar
- 2 large free-range eggs
- 1 tsp instant coffee dissolved in 2 teaspoons water
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ¾ cup (160ml/5½fl oz) buttermilk

For the chocolate buttercream

- 85g/3oz unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 1½ cups (345g/12oz) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2½ cups (300g/10½oz) icing sugar
- 2 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ cup (120ml/4fl oz) double cream, at room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Preparation method

1. Position a rack in the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350F/180C/Gas 4 and line 12 muffin tin cups with paper cupcake liners.
2. Sift the flour, cocoa powder, bicarbonate of soda and salt into a medium bowl and set aside.
3. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the butter and sugar in a large bowl until smoothly blended - about two minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing until each is blended into the batter.
4. Add the dissolved coffee and vanilla and beat for two more minutes. On a low speed, add half of the flour mixture, mixing to incorporate it, then mix in the buttermilk. Mix in the remaining flour mixture just until it is incorporated and the batter looks smooth.
5. Fill each paper liner with a scant quarter of a cup of batter (1cm/½in below the top of the liner) – you can use an ice cream scoop for this. Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until the tops feel firm and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove the cupcakes from the oven and cool for 10 minutes on a wire rack, then remove the cupcakes from the pan onto the wire rack and leave to cool completely.
6. For the chocolate buttercream, put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl (or the top of a double boiler) and place it over, but not touching

30 mins to 1 hour

preparation time

10 to 30 mins

cooking time

Makes 12

By Elinor Klivans

Add coffee, orange zest, rum or chocolate chips to this easy chocolate cupcake recipe.

Top recipe tip

The batter will also make 48 mini-cupcakes that bake for about 18 minutes. If desired, mix in one of the following flavorings when adding the vanilla extract: add one teaspoon orange zest, one tablespoon rum or one teaspoon instant coffee dissolved in one teaspoon water. Use a large spoon to stir in one of the following after the buttermilk is incorporated: 115g/4oz miniature chocolate chips or grated chocolate, or 115g/4oz chopped nuts. The dark and smooth chocolate buttercream needs no cooking and mixes together quickly. To store frosted cupcakes, cover them carefully and refrigerate for up to two days. Bring the frosted cupcakes to room temperature before serving them. One tablespoon of liqueur, half a teaspoon of almond or peppermint extract, or one teaspoon of orange zest can be mixed into the frosting.

some barely simmering water in a saucepan (or the bottom of the double boiler). Stir until the chocolate melts and is smooth. Remove from the water and set aside to cool slightly.

7. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the butter, icing sugar and cocoa powder in a large bowl until smoothly blended – about two minutes. It will look crumbly at first, but will become smooth. Stir in the melted chocolate.
8. Mix in the cream and vanilla to blend them smoothly. Return to medium speed and beat for two minutes until smooth and creamy. The frosting will lighten slightly in color.
9. To frost the cupcakes, use a pastry bag fitted with a star tip to pipe thick swirls of frosting over the top of each cupcake. Or use a small metal spatula to spread a generous layer of frosting over the top of each cupcake. Use the spatula to swirl the top of the frosting to make a little curlicue on the top.