

Recipe Packet: Baking Basics – Fanciful Cupcakes

Strawberry-Cheesecake Cupcakes

Makes 12 cupcakes

1 cup graham cracker crumbs
2 tablespoons melted butter
pinch salt
8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup Greek style strained yogurt, room temperature
¼ cup strawberry jam
1 ½ t. vanilla
2 large eggs
2 egg yolks
Strawberry fans, for garnish

Preheat oven to 300°F. Line a 12-cup cupcake tin with paper or foil liners.

In a large bowl, mix together the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter and pinch of salt together. Evenly divide the mixture among the cupcake liners and press down firmly. Bake for 10 minutes, then remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

In a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese, yogurt and sugar together on medium speed for about a minute scraping the bowl with a rubber scraper. Add the jam and vanilla. Scrape the bowl and mix until smooth. Add the eggs one at a time and mix until smooth.

Pour the mixture into the cupcake liners. Set the cupcake pan in a sheetpan and pour enough hot water to come up 1/3 the side of the pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until firm yet slightly jiggle in the center. Remove from oven and let rest refrigerate until cold and firm. Garnish with a strawberry fan.

To make a strawberry fan, take a medium-sized strawberry, keep its green top on and make thin vertical slices from a ½-inch under the green to down to the base – be careful not to slice all the way through the berry – keep the top together. Use your fingers to gently press down and flatten the berry – it should fan out easily. For a video demonstration watch: http://youtu.be/ntAbpjb_-2o

Recipe Packet: Baking Basics – Fanciful Cupcakes

Pina Colada Cupcakes

Makes 18 cupcakes

2 large eggs, separated, room temperature
One 8-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
1 cup granulated sugar
1 stick unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup sifted cake flour
½ cup buttermilk, room temperature
1 cup guava jam
1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin
4 teaspoons cold water
2 cups whipped cream
¼ cup powdered sugar
1 cup flaked coconut, lightly toasted
18 purple Dendrobium orchids, for garnish

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line 2 12-cup muffin or cupcake pans with paper cupcake liners. Set aside.

Cream butter, sugar, and vanilla. Add the egg yolks one at a time until the batter is thick and well-blended. Stir in the pineapple.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until soft peaks form. Set aside.

Sift the baking soda, salt and cake flour together and add to the butter mixture alternately with the buttermilk, beginning and ending with the flour. Fold the egg whites into the batter.

Spoon the batter into the prepared cupcake pans, filling it 2/3s full and bake approximately for 35 minutes or until the cake tests done in the center. Cool the cupcakes in the pan for 5 minutes, then remove them from the pan and let cool completely on racks.

In a small bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over 4 teaspoons of water and warm to dissolve. Set aside. Whip the cream by beating the cream, sugar, vanilla extract and gelatin mixture on high speed with an electric mixer until the cream holds stiff peaks.

To Assemble:

With a small sharp knife, cut into the cupcake at an angle and scoop out the center of the cake. Keep top for later. Fill with half a teaspoon of guava jam and replace a portion of the cupcake for the top. Frost with the whipped cream and sprinkle the toasted coconut on top. Garnish with a Dendrobium orchid.

Recipe Packet: Baking Basics – Fanciful Cupcakes

The Minty Chocolate Cupcake

Makes 24 cupcakes (2 dozen)

6 ounces unbleached all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
1.25 oz cocoa powder
8 oz sugar
1 ¼ cup hot water
3 oz vegetable oil
2 eggs

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line 2 12-cup cupcake pans with paper liners. Set aside.

Sift the flour, salt and baking soda together. Set aside.

In a mixing bowl, combine the cocoa, sugar and water together until dissolved. Slow the mixer and add the oil and eggs, one at a time.

Add the flour mixture and mix to blend completely.

Divide the batter between the cupcake cups, filling each 2/3s full. Bake for approximately 20 -25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove from the oven and allow to cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove each cupcake from the pan and continue to completely cool before frosting.

Minty Buttercream

Makes 2 cups

2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
2 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
1 pound sifted powdered sugar
pinch salt
3-4 drops of peppermint extract (or 2 tablespoons Crème de Menthe)

In a large mixing bowl, beat all of the ingredients together until light and fluffy, about 10 minutes.

Add a drop of green icing gel to tint green for grasshopper cupcakes, or paint stripes of red icing dye up the insides of a piping bag to create peppermint-striped patterns when piping.