

Blackberry Lavender Lemonade Cupcakes

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 50-55 minutes

bake time: 12-15 minutes

total time: 1 hour, 10 minutes (plus cooling time--see recipe for what can be made the day before)

servings: 24



Ingredients

for the blackberry lavender jam

- 12 ounces fresh blackberries, rinsed
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (113g) honey
- 1 tablespoon (14t) lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon dried culinary lavender (it's too light for an equivalent in grams)
- 1 tablespoon (7g) cornstarch

for the blackberry lavender concentrate*

- 6 ounces fresh blackberries, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon (21g) honey
- squeeze of lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon dried culinary lavender ($\frac{1}{2}$ will yield a very subtle flavor)
- 1 tablespoon (7g) cornstarch (optional, use if it's very warm out)

for the blackberry lavender buttercream

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (170g) unsalted butter**, softened slightly***
- 4-5 cups (500-625g) powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon (13g) pure vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (3g) sea salt
- blackberry lavender concentrate, strained

for the lemonade cupcakes

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (184g) whole milk
- peeled zest of 2-3 lemons
- 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons (244g) cake flour, spooned then leveled (see note above for making your own)
- 2 teaspoons (8g) baking powder

- ½ teaspoon (3g) sea salt
- ¾ cup (170g) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 ⅔ cups (335g) granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons (12g) grated lemon zest (2 large lemons)
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons (27g) avocado or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon (13g) vanilla extract
- ¼ cup (58g) fresh lemon juice

Instructions

cold infuse the lemon peel and milk for the cupcakes

1. The night before you plan to make the cupcakes, use a vegetable peeler to remove the zest (avoid the white pith) of 2-3 lemons. Add this to your milk in a sealed jar. Refrigerate until ready to make the cupcakes.

make the blackberry lavender jam

2. Combine all ingredients except for cornstarch in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally and adjusting heat to keep it at a good simmer but not a boil.
3. After a few minutes, once there's some juice, remove about 2 tablespoons of the juice. It's best to do this before the jam is done, so you get the thinner juices. Reserve this for later. As the berries begin to break down, you can help them along by crushing them with a wooden spoon or spatula.
4. Once the blackberries are about halfway broken down and it's just starting to resemble a really chunky jam, taste to see if it needs more honey or lavender. It's best to add more to taste earlier on, but I wouldn't recommend more than 2 teaspoons lavender.
5. After 5-10 minutes of cooking, when the berries are mostly broken down but clearly still need a few minutes of cooking, whisk cornstarch with the reserved juice. Add to the saucepan Stir until well blended and continue cooking until thickened, but no more than 10 minutes (the cornstarch can break and cause the jam to separate if heated too long). It will thicken slightly as it cools.
6. If desired, strain through a fine mesh sieve. I prefer leaving the seeds to give some structure, so it doesn't absorb into the cupcakes. Allow to cool to room temperature

then pour into an airtight container and refrigerate until set, at least 2 hours but ideally overnight.

make the blackberry lavender concentrate

7. Combine all concentrate ingredients, except for cornstarch, in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally and adjusting heat to keep it at a good simmer but not a boil. When the berries begin to break down, you can help them along by crushing them with a wooden spoon or spatula.
8. If you need a sturdy frosting (for outdoor events in warm weather), remove about 2 tablespoons of the juice early on once it becomes somewhat liquidy. It's best to do this before the jam is done, so you get the thinner juices. Once the berries are nearly broken down, after about 5 minutes, add 1 tablespoon cornstarch to the reserved liquid and whisk until well-blended. Add this to the pot and stir until well-blended.
9. Continue cooking 5-10 minutes, until the berries are fully broken down and the mixture has thickened slightly (no more than 10 minutes after adding cornstarch, or it can actually break down and separate once cooled).
10. Strain through a fine mesh sieve, pressing well to get all of the juices out. Set aside to cool (or refrigerate while you begin beating the butter--it should be cool by the time you need it).

make the blackberry lavender buttercream (can also be made while cupcakes cool)

11. While the concentrate cools, beat the butter in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment until light and fluffy, about 1 minute. Add the powdered sugar, one cup at a time, and beat first on low then slowly increase to high until smooth after each addition. Scrape down the bowl after every other cup.
12. Once you've added 4 cups powdered sugar, add the vanilla, salt, and half of the cooled blackberry lavender concentrate. Beat on high until well-blended, about 1 minute. Taste. Add more concentrate and/or powdered sugar to taste.
13. Once the taste is to your liking, scrape down the bowl and beat on high for about 1 minute, until fully blended.

make the lemonade cupcakes

14. When you take the butter and eggs out to warm up, strain the lemon peel from the milk and let it come to room temperature for 30-60 minutes.

15. When ready to bake, preheat oven to 325 (350 if at high elevation). Line 2 cupcake pans with liners.
16. In a food processor, pulse the sugar and grated lemon zest. You can also rub it together with your hands or stir with a wooden spoon, pressing against the sides of the bowl, until fragrant.
17. In a medium mixing bowl, sift then whisk together cake flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.
18. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment (or a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), beat the butter on high until fluffy, about 1 minute. Add the lemon sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Scrape the bowl as necessary, at least once.
19. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing on medium until light and fluffy (about 30 seconds) and scraping the bowl after each addition. Add the vanilla and oil and mix on medium until well blended.
20. Add half of the flour and mix on low until just barely blended. Add the milk and lemon juice and mix on low until just barely blended. Add the remaining flour and mix on low until just barely blended. Scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl. Mix on low another 3-5 seconds, just to mix it all. Don't worry if there are a few streaks of flour.
21. Divide evenly between your cupcake liners, filling about $\frac{2}{3}$ full (no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full). Bake for 12-15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle cupcake comes out clean. Check early, around 10 minutes, as climate, elevation, and individual ovens can cause the bake time to vary.
22. Let cupcakes cool in the pan 5-10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.

assemble

23. When the cupcakes are cool, use a cupcake corer or knife to remove about a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep and wide chunk of cupcake from the center. Fill with blackberry lavender jam, just until level with the cupcake (don't overfill).
24. Frost with blackberry lavender buttercream. You can either use a piping bag and a 1M piping tip, like I did. Or you can frost with an offset spatula or butterknife, but start from the edge to help seal in the jam or it will spread into the buttercream (which could have a fresh, springy look if you want!).

Enjoy!

Cupcakes should be stored in a truly airtight container. If using a typical cupcake caddy, wrap the seam with plastic wrap to preserve freshness. Cupcakes will last 3-5 days at room temperature.

Split up your time by making the jam and buttercream ahead. Buttercream can be kept on the counter overnight or refrigerated 1-2 weeks or frozen 1-2 months, both in an airtight container. Jam can be kept refrigerated about a month or frozen up to 3 months. Let come to room temperature on the counter. If chilled longer than overnight, it may need to be stirred or quickly whipped with a mixer.

**Instead of making a whole separate concentrate for the buttercream, you can optionally reserve about ½ cup or so of the finished jam, add a pinch of lavender (no more than ½ teaspoon) and continue cooking that for a few minutes then strain it and set aside to cool. You could also simply strain a bit of the jam to get about ¼ cup juice, but the lavender flavor will be very subtle.*

***I highly recommend European style butter for frosting! It has less water and makes a creamier frosting.*

****If your butter has become shiny or oily, put it back in the fridge for 5-10 minutes until it firms up a bit (not hard) and is matte in appearance.*