

Chocolate Orange Buttercream

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 10-15 minutes

cook time: 10-15 minutes (in two segments)

steep time: 1 hour

total time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

yields: about 2½-3 cups, enough for 24 cupcakes or a 2-3 layer cake



Ingredients

- 3 large oranges, washed
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream
- 6 ounces baking chocolate or chips, dark or semi-sweet are ideal
- 1 ½ cups (3 sticks/12 ounces) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 5 cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt (or ½ teaspoon table salt)
- optional: ½ teaspoon orange extract or orange essence

Instructions

1. First, be sure to wash the oranges with fruit and vegetable wash or diluted white vinegar to remove wax, dirt, and pesticides, since you'll be using the zest. Use a potato peeler to peel the zest of 2 oranges, trying to avoid getting a lot of the pith (white part). Use a zester or grater to grade the zest of the third orange. Juice half of one orange (you can reserve the rest of the fruit/juice for something else).
2. Steep the oranges. Place the peeled zest and heavy whipping cream in a small saucepan. Over medium heat, bring the cream to a simmer, stirring constantly to avoid scalding it. Once simmering, remove from heat and set aside. Stir frequently for the first few minutes after removing it so it doesn't form a skin. Let steep 1 hour. *This is a great time to take your butter out to soften.*

3. Once the cream has steeped and has a good orange flavor, strain the cream to remove the zest, pressing on the orange pieces to get all of the flavor out (this helps get a bit of the natural oils as well, which yields a more orange-y flavor).
4. Make the ganache. Add the cream and chopped baking chocolate (or chocolate chips) to a medium heatproof bowl. Bring 1-2 inches water to a simmer in a medium saucepan, then turn down to low. Set the chocolate over it and stir constantly over low heat, until chocolate is almost all melted. Remove from heat and stir until smooth. Set aside to cool slightly (it shouldn't be very hot if you cooked it over low heat). Stir occasionally so a skin doesn't form.
5. Make the buttercream. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), beat butter on high until smooth, about 30 seconds. Add the powdered sugar, one cup at a time, starting on low then increasing to high for about 30 seconds for each addition. Halfway through, scrape down the sides and bottom of your bowl.
6. Add the reserved grated orange zest, cocoa powder, vanilla, salt, orange extract (if using--I didn't and it still tasted great). Beat on low then increase speed to high until smooth, about 30 seconds.
7. By this point, the ganache should be cooled to room temperature. If not, put it in the fridge for 5 minutes, stirring halfway so it doesn't harden on top. Add to the buttercream and beat on high for about 1 minute. Taste. Add some of the orange juice, 1 tablespoon at a time, until desired taste and consistency is reached, up to 3 or 4 tablespoons. If the ganache was too warm and the frosting is a little loose, refrigerate for 10 minutes to help firm it up. You can also add a little more powdered sugar or cocoa powder to help thicken it.
8. Once the taste is to your liking, beat on high for 2-3 minutes to fluff it up, then on low for one minute (or stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula for 1 minute) to help release any air bubbles.

Enjoy! Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for 1-2 months. Frosted cakes may be stored at room temperature for 3-5 days, if sealed tightly.