

Dark Chocolate Orange Cupcakes

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 30-35 minutes

steep time: 1 hour

bake time: 15-18 minutes

total time: 1 hour, 50 minutes (including time to make the buttercream; excludes time to make candied orange slices)

yields: 24 cupcakes



Ingredients

- 2-3 large oranges
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole milk
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups flour, spooned and leveled
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup avocado, grapeseed, or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup hot, good quality coffee
- 3 ounces semisweet or dark chocolate chips or chopped baking chocolate
- 1 batch [chocolate orange buttercream](#)
- 1 batch [candied orange slices](#) (make the day before--optional but so fun!)

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 2-3 oranges, trying to avoid getting a lot of the pith (white part). Juice half of one of the oranges (save remaining fruit or juice for another bake or to get your vitamin C boost!).

2. Steep the zest. Place the peeled zest and milk in a small saucepan. Over medium heat, bring the milk 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 and eggs out to warm up as well as to heat and steep the heavy cream and soften the butter for the [buttercream](#).*
3. When milk is nearly ready, line 2 cupcake pans with liners and preheat the oven to 325.
4. Once the milk has steeped and has a good orange flavor, strain the milk 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). Add enough fresh orange juice to equal 1 cup milk and juice. Stir and set aside for 5-10 minutes while you prep the rest of the ingredients and make your coffee (make sure you're able to keep it hot or else wait until you need it to make it).
5. Sift then whisk together the sugar, flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in the bowl of your stand mixer or a large mixing bowl. Don't skip the sifting! Fit to the mixer with the paddle attachment.
6. Vigorously whisk the eggs, oil, vanilla, and milk/juice for about 30 seconds until very well combined.
7. Combine very hot coffee and chocolate chips. Stir vigorously until chocolate is melted. While whisking constantly and quickly, very, very slowly pour the coffee into the other wet ingredients.
8. With the mixer on low, slowly add the wet ingredients to the dry. Once combined, immediately turn off the mixer and scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. Beat on medium for exactly 2 minutes.
9. Fill cupcake liners $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ full (no more than $\frac{3}{4}$). Bake at 325 for 15-18 minutes, until a toothpick inserted comes out with just moist crumbs. Check early, around 12 minutes, as bake time varies by oven and climate.
10. Let cool in pan 5-10 minutes then remove to cool completely. While cupcakes cool, make the buttercream. Frost or pipe buttercream on cooled cupcakes. Top with half a [candied orange](#).

Enjoy! Store leftovers in an airtight container at room temperature for 3-5 days.