

Chocolate Peppermint Cupcakes

Makes 12



***Note: If you're making these at high altitude, use 3 eggs instead of 2 and increase your oven temperature to 375 degrees. Bake for 16-18 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.**

For the cupcakes:

3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1/3 cup Dutch process cocoa powder
3/4 cup hot coffee
3/4 cup bread flour
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
6 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 eggs*
2 teaspoons white vinegar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup Andes creme de menthe baking pieces

For the ganache:

2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1/4 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon powdered sugar
1 teaspoon corn syrup

For the peppermint buttercream:

1/2 cup butter, softened
2 tablespoons milk
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon vanilla
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
1 pound powdered sugar (about 3.5-4 cups)
1 cup shortening

For the topping:

2-3 candy canes, crushed

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

High altitude: preheat to 375 degrees.

For the cupcakes, in a medium bowl, combine the chopped chocolate, cocoa powder, and hot coffee. Let sit for one minute and then whisk until smooth. Set in the refrigerator to cool completely, about 15-20 minutes. Whisk in the oil, eggs, vinegar, and vanilla until blended. Add in the salt and baking soda and whisk until incorporated. Add in the sugar and bread flour and whisk until smooth. Fold in the Andes baking pieces. Divide the batter among 12 muffin cups in a muffin pan (about 1/4 cup of batter each). Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, about 17-19 minutes (*16-18 minutes for high altitude*). Cool cupcakes in the pan for about 10 minutes and then remove to the counter and let cool completely.

While the cupcakes are cooling, make the peppermint buttercream. Place the butter, milk, salt, vanilla, and peppermint extract in the bowl of an electric mixer. Mix on medium using the paddle attachment (or use a hand mixer) until everything is blended. Add in half the powdered sugar and mix on low until combined. Add in the shortening and mix on medium until smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add in the rest of the powdered sugar and mix on medium high until smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl again and mix until smooth. If the frosting is too thick, you can add more milk one teaspoon at a time. Transfer the frosting to a piping bag and set aside.

When the cupcakes are cool, make the ganache. Place the chocolate, heavy cream, powdered sugar, and corn syrup in a microwave safe bowl. Microwave for 30-second intervals, stirring in between, until smooth. Dunk the top of the cupcakes into the ganache and let harden, about 20 minutes. You can speed this process up by putting the cupcakes in the refrigerator.

Once the ganache has set, pipe the frosting on the cupcakes and sprinkle with the crushed candy canes.

Cupcake and ganache recipe from Cook's Illustrated. Frosting recipe from She Makes and Bakes

www.shemakesandbakes.com