

Salt and Serenity

Chocolate Cupcakes with Browned Butter Icing

Makes 24 cupcakes

Chocolate cupcake recipe adapted from Noreen Gilletz's *"Pleasures of Your Food Processor."*

Cupcakes

2/3 cup cocoa powder
2 1/4 cups flour
2 cups sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
3/4-teaspoon salt
1 1/4 cups whole milk
1/4 cup strong coffee or espresso (cold)
3 eggs
1 1/4 cups vegetable oil

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Combine all dry ingredients in food processor bowl, fitted with the steel knife. Process until blended, about 10 seconds. Add milk, coffee and eggs. Start processor and add oil through feed tube while machine is running. Process batter for 45 seconds. Do not insert pusher in feed tube and do not over-process.
2. Line twenty-four 1/3-cup muffin cups with paper liners. Divide batter among muffin cups. Fill about 2/3 full. Bake cupcakes until tops spring back when gently touched and tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 18-20 minutes. A few wet crumbs can still cling to the tester. Do not over-bake. Transfer cupcakes in pans to rack; cool 10 minutes. Carefully remove cupcakes from pans and cool completely on rack.

Browned Butter Icing

1-1/2 pounds unsalted butter
5 cups icing sugar
1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Cut butter into 1-inch cubes. Place in a saucepan with a light coloured bottom, over medium heat and melt. Swirl pan occasionally to promote even browning. The butter will foam up and then go from a pale lemon

yellow to a tan colour and finally it will become a toasty brown, like the colour of hazelnuts. You will also be able to smell when it is done. It will have a very heady nutty aroma.

2. Transfer browned butter to a heatproof container and allow to cool on the counter before refrigerating. You will notice that some of the milk solids will have settled on the bottom of the melted butter. They are darker in colour. You can strain the browned butter through cheesecloth and discard the solids, or you can keep them. I like the flavour of them and the speckled appearance that they lend to the finished buttercream.
3. Refrigerate brown butter until it has the consistency of room temperature butter, about an hour. Using an electric mixer, beat softened browned butter, icing sugar, salt and vanilla until creamy.
4. Fit a disposable pastry bag with a star tip and pipe icing on cooled cupcakes.