

Ginger Orange Cupcakes with Vanilla Buttercream

1 cup Flour

1 teaspoon Ground Ginger

¼ teaspoons Nutmeg

¼ teaspoons Salt

¼ teaspoons Baking Soda

⅛ teaspoons Baking Powder

6 Tablespoons Butter, Softened At Room Temperature

⅔ cups Sugar

2 Tablespoons Orange Zest

1 Tablespoon Fresh Ginger, Grated

½ teaspoons Vanilla Extract

3 Tablespoons Orange Juice, Freshly Squeezed

1 whole Egg

½ cups Sour Cream

¼ cups Candied Ginger Finely Chopped

Preheat the oven to 350F and prepare the cupcake pans. In a large bowl combine the flour, ground ginger, nutmeg, salt, baking soda and baking powder and set aside. With a mixer, cream the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add the orange zest, grated fresh ginger and vanilla extract and beat until combined. Add the orange juice and egg and beat until smooth. Add about ⅓ of the flour mixture, beating on low. Then ½ of the sour cream. Repeat ending with the last third of the flour mixture. Remove the bowl from the mixer and fold in the candied ginger. Fill the prepared cupcake pans half to three-quarters full. (It must be something with my oven, but no matter the recipe, if I fill the cups more than half full they rise too much and end up collapsing in on themselves.) Bake until light and golden. For me this was about 17 minutes. Let them cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack until completely cool before frosting.

Vanilla Italian Buttercream

1 1/4 cups granulated sugar

1/4 cup water

4 egg whites (about 1/2 cup)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cubed and softened at room temperature

Combine sugar and water in a medium-sized saucepan. Heat over low heat, stirring with a metal spoon, until the sugar has dissolved and the syrup is clear. Increase heat to medium-high and allow syrup to come to a boil.

Meanwhile, place egg whites in a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, or in a medium bowl if using a handheld mixer, and beat until whites are almost able to hold soft peaks.

Cook syrup until it reaches 235°F, then immediately remove from heat and slowly drizzle the hot syrup into the bowl with the egg whites, mixing continuously to prevent the eggs from scrambling: don't pour the syrup onto the whisk, or the syrup may splatter against the sides of the bowl; instead, aim for a spot close to the whisk. Once all the syrup has been added, keep mixing until the bottom of the bowl feels cool to the touch and the meringue has cooled down to body temperature.

Add butter one cube at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla and salt. The mixture may start to look as if it's separating, but don't panic: just keep mixing and whipping until the buttercream comes together and becomes smooth and gorgeous

Chocolate Oatmeal Cupcakes with Raspberry Buttercream

1 cup quick cooking oats (not rolled oats)

1 3/4 cups very hot, strong coffee (decaf is fine)

1 cup light brown sugar, packed

1 cup granulated sugar

1/2 cup salted butter, melted

2 tsp vanilla extract

2 large eggs, room temp and lightly beaten

1 3/4 cups all purpose flour

1 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp table salt

1 1/2 TB unsweetened real cocoa powder

6 oz mini semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350. Line muffin tins and set aside. In a bowl, combine quick oats with very hot coffee, stir well, and let stand. Cover to keep warm. Meanwhile: In the bowl of a stand mixer, cream butter and both sugars with paddle attachment, until smooth and creamy. Add vanilla and eggs, and mix well. Add flour, baking soda, salt, and cocoa straight into mixing bowl, and mix with paddle attachment just until incorporated (do not over mix) Add hot oat/coffee mixture to batter and mix until incorporated. Add mini chocolate chips, and stir by hand. If your oat/coffee mixture was warm enough, the mini chips should melt into batter during stirring. Divide batter into lined muffin tins, filling almost to the tops. Bake approx. 18-20 minutes, or just until a toothpick inserted in centers comes out with few moist crumbs attached (not completely clean.) Let cool in muffin tins.

Raspberry Italian Buttercream

1 1/4 cups granulated sugar

1/4 cup water

4 egg whites (about 1/2 cup)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cubed and softened at room temperature

12 oz frozen raspberries, thawed

Combine sugar and water in a medium-sized saucepan. Heat over low heat, stirring with a metal spoon, until the sugar has dissolved and the syrup is clear. Increase heat to medium-high and allow syrup to come to a boil.

Meanwhile, place egg whites in a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, or in a medium bowl if using a handheld mixer, and beat until whites are almost able to hold soft peaks.

Cook syrup until it reaches 235°F, then immediately remove from heat and slowly drizzle the hot syrup into the bowl with the egg whites, mixing continuously to prevent the eggs from scrambling: don't pour the syrup onto the whisk, or the syrup may splatter against the sides of the bowl; instead, aim for a spot close to the whisk. Once all the syrup has been added, keep mixing until the bottom of the bowl feels cool to the touch and the meringue has cooled down to body temperature.

While the mixture is whipping, place the thawed berries in the bowl of a food processor and puree until smooth. Strain mixture through a fine mesh sieve to remove chunks and seeds.

Once meringue is ready, add butter one cube at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla and salt. The mixture may start to look as if it's separating, but don't panic: just keep mixing and whipping until the buttercream comes together and becomes smooth and gorgeous.