



Mini Cakes & Easy Icing

By Katie Beck Photography by Marty Shortum Studio

The classic cupcake is a treat that can be enjoyed by all. Craved by kids of all ages, these mini-delicacies can take the form of gourmet goodies or after-school delights. Their role as a dessert has changed over the years, ranging from the original sweet snack for the

kids to a unique version of the modern day wedding cake. These bite-sized desserts come in all shapes, sizes and flavors, but when it comes down to it, there's nothing like a classic white cupcake with real vanilla buttercream frosting.

This recipe is truly a piece of cake—pun intended. The cupcakes are super kid-friendly, and the only difficult thing about the icing will be keeping everyone's fingers out of the bowl before it can make it to the cupcakes. Using a mini muffin pan can create a cute treat that's easy to pop, but the regular size allows you to take a minute to indulge in these classic cake delights.

THE CUPCAKES

YIELDS 12-14 CUPCAKES

- 3 cups flour
- 2 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2/3 cup unsalted butter
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/4 cups whole milk
- 1 tsp almond extract

Preheat the oven to 350. Place paper liners in muffin pan and set aside. In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder and salt. In a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the butter and gradually add the sugar until the mixture is light and airy. Add the eggs one at a time—remember to scrape down the sides of the bowl and incorporate each egg well.

In a small bowl combine the milk and almond extract. Add about one-quarter of the flour mixture to the butter mixture and incorporate well. Then add one-quarter of the milk mixture to the butter until well incorporated. Continue alternating between the flour and the milk mixture, scraping down the sides of the mixing bowl until the batter is well combined. Fill the paper-lined cupcake tins about 1/2 full and bake for about 15-20 minutes or until the cake springs back when lightly touched.

EASY ICING

- 3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 4 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1 vanilla bean

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter until very smooth. Cut the vanilla bean down the middle, scrape the contents into the milk and whisk until the vanilla bean is well distributed. Add the powdered sugar, salt and milk to the butter and mix until creamy and smooth. (Optional—place a little icing in separate bowls and add one drop of food coloring to decorate each cupcake differently). *

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