

Halloween Oreo Spider Cupcakes

INGREDIENTS

For the cupcakes:

- 3/4 cup all purpose flour (plus two tbsp)
- 3 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3/4 cup of sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 cup whole milk, at room temperature
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract

For the Oreo frosting:

- 60g cream cheese, softened
- 30g butter, softened
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- 3/4 cup soft icing mixture (we used Coles Soft Icing Sugar)
- 9 crushed Oreo biscuits

For the Oreo spider decorations:

- 12 chocolate Oreo biscuits
- Pocky sticks (available at most supermarkets)
- Candy eye decorations
- Extra frosting or melted chocolate to use as 'glue'

INSTRUCTIONS

For the cupcakes:

1. Preheat the oven to 180C.
2. Apply paper muffin cake cases into a 12 cup regular muffin tray. Set aside.
3. In a mixing bowl, combine the cocoa powder, flour, baking powder, sugar, salt and butter. Using an electric mixer, beat on low until everything is well combined and you get a sandy consistency.
4. In another bowl, mix the milk, vanilla and egg together; gradually pour about half into the flour mixture. Whisk to combine at high speed in order to get rid of any lumps.
5. Turn the mixer down to low and gradually pour in the remaining milk mixture. Beat for about 5 minutes or until the batter is smooth. Do not overmix.
6. Spoon the batter into the paper cases, filling 2/3 of each and bake in the preheated oven for 23 to 25 minutes, or until the cakes bounce back when touched. A skewer inserted in the middle should come out clean when the cakes are done.
7. Remove and allow to cool slightly in the pan before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
8. Once the chocolate cupcakes are cold, you can spoon frosting on top.

For the Oreo frosting:

1. Place cheese, butter and vanilla in a bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat until pale. Gradually add icing sugar mixture, beating until combined.
2. Add 9 crushed Oreos to the mixture and mix until combined with a smooth, fluffy consistency.
3. Frost each of the 12 cupcakes with the Oreo frosting.

For the Oreo Spiders:

1. Cut Pocky Sticks to about 1 inch pieces.
2. Remove the top of an Oreo (the 'blank' side) and press your Pocky legs into the cream-side of the Oreo.
3. Press the 'blank' Oreo back on top of the legs (you can use frosting or melted chocolate to better secure the Oreo together). Use either the frosting or melted chocolate to secure the candy eyes. (We just dipped the tip of a toothpick into the melted chocolate and dabbed it onto the back of the candy eyes and set it on the Oreo to firm.)
4. Place your Oreo Spiders on your frosted cupcakes and enjoy!

Bloody Red Velvet Cupcakes

INGREDIENTS

- 120g soft unsalted butter
- 300g caster sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 20g cocoa powder
- 1 tbsp red food-colouring paste*, such as Sugarflair in Red Extra
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 240ml milk
- 300g plain flour
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 3 tsp white vinegar

For the frosting:

- 60g cream cheese, softened
- 30g butter, softened
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- 3/4 cup soft icing mixture (we used Coles Soft Icing Sugar)

INSTRUCTIONS

For the cupcakes:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Divide 16 paper muffin cases between two 12 cup regular muffin trays.
3. Put the butter and the sugar in an electric mixer with a paddle attachment (or use a handheld electric whisk) and beat on medium speed until light and fluffy.
4. Turn the mixer up to high speed, slowly add the eggs and beat until well combined.
5. In a separate bowl, mix together the cocoa powder, food-colouring paste, 3 tablespoons of water and vanilla extract to make a thick, dark paste.
6. Add to the butter mixture and mix until evenly combined and coloured (scrape any unmixed ingredients from the side of the bowl with a rubber spatula).
7. Turn the mixer down to slow speed and slowly pour in half the milk. Beat until well mixed, then add half the flour, and beat until well combined.
8. Repeat this process until all the milk and flour have been added. Scrape down the side of the bowl again. Turn the mixer up to high speed and beat until you have a smooth, even mixture.
9. Turn the mixer down to low speed and add the salt, bicarbonate of soda and vinegar. Beat until well mixed, then turn up the speed again and beat for a couple more minutes.

10. Divide evenly between the paper cases and bake in the preheated oven for 20–25 minutes, or until the sponge bounces back when touched. A skewer inserted in the centre should come out clean.
11. Leave the cupcakes to cool for about 15 minutes in the trays before turning out onto a wire cooling rack to cool completely

For the frosting:

1. Place cheese, butter and vanilla in a bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat until pale. Gradually add icing sugar mixture, beating until combined.
2. Frost each of the 16 cupcakes
3. Drizzle strawberry sauce over the top of each cake for a bloody touch (see strawberry sauce recipe below).

Strawberry Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 3 tbsp (45ml) warm water
- 450g strawberries, hulled and sliced in half (you can use frozen; don't thaw)
- Zest and juice from 1/2 small lemon (see note)*
- 1/4 cup (50g) granulated sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk the cornstarch and water together until all the cornstarch has dissolved.
2. Place the cornstarch mixture, along with the rest of the ingredients, into a small saucepan over medium heat. Using a wooden spoon or rubber spatula, stir the mixture as it cooks. Break up some of the strawberries as you stir.
3. Bring it to a simmer and allow to simmer for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. After 5 minutes, remove pan from the heat and allow to cool. The mixture will thicken as it cools.
4. You can serve the sauce warm before it cools completely if desired, or store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Strawberry topping will be thick after refrigeration, so microwave for 15 seconds or warm on the stove to thin out, if desired.

