

CRANBERRY ORANGE CUPCAKES WITH WHITE CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING AND TOASTED ALMONDS

INGREDIENTS

for the Cupcakes

2 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
2 cups sugar
3/4 cup butter, melted and cooled
1 teaspoon pure vanilla
zest of 1 orange
juice of 1/2 orange

For the Cranberry Filling

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup orange juice
2 cups (half a bag) frozen cranberries (frozen is fine, but not dried)

For the Frosting

1 stick of butter, at room temperature
2 1/2 cups powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 ounces white chocolate, melted
1-2 tablespoons milk
1 cup sliced almonds, toasted

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 325F degrees. Like a muffin pan with cupcake liners

First, make your cupcakes: Combine the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Beat eggs and sugar in a large bowl on medium high speed until mixture is lighter in color and has increased in volume, about 5 minutes. Turn mixer to low and slowly add butter. Turn mixer to medium speed and beat for 2 minutes. Add vanilla, zest, and orange juice and stir. Slowly fold 1/2 cup of the flour mixture at a time into the egg and sugar mixture.

Pour into pan liners, approximately 2/3 full. Bake for 35 minutes or when a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool in pan on cooling rack for 10 minutes and then remove to cool completely. (note: these can be made a day ahead and stored in a airtight container)

Make your cranberry sauce: Wash and pick over the cranberries as sometimes there are bits of leaves in the bag. Also, you may wish to reserve a dozen or so of the nicest cranberries to garnish the cupcakes. Then, in a saucepan bring to a boil water and sugar, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add cranberries, return to a boil. Reduce heat, simmer for 10 minutes or until cranberries burst. Remove from heat. Cool completely at room temperature and then chill in refrigerator.

Make your frosting: Cream butter in an electric mixer until fluffy, then add vanilla. Slowly add in powdered sugar 1/2 cup at a time with the mixer on low speed. Add in melted white chocolate and beat until incorporated. To reach desired consistency, add in milk 1 teaspoon at a time with mixer on low speed. If frosting becomes too liquidy, simply add additional sugar. Let chill in refrigerator for 20 minutes before frosting your cupcakes.

To assemble, frost and garnish: heat oven to 300F and place almond slices on a baking sheet. Toast for 5-7 minutes, but be careful not to burn (I check after 4 minutes to make sure they aren't getting too dark). Let cool completely.

Insert a small knife at a 45 degree angle about 1/8 inch from the edge of each cupcake and cut all the way around, remove a cone of cake. Cut away all but the top 1/4 inch of the cone; leaving only a small disk of cake which will be used to top the cupcake. Fill each cupcake with 2 tablespoons of the cranberry filling and top with the disk of cake. (note: If you have a cupcake corer, you can also use this to hollow out your cupcakes). Frost cupcakes with buttercream frosting and sprinkle with toasted almond slices. Garnish with a fresh cranberry (optional)