

ALMOND JOY CUPCAKES

INGREDIENTS

for the cupcakes

4 1/2 ounces high-quality bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
9 tablespoons (1 stick plus 1 tablespoon) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup confectioners' sugar
6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 cup all-purpose flour

For the filling

1 cup shredded coconut (untoasted)
1/2 cup cream of coconut

For the frosting

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
2 1/2 cups powdered sugar
1 can coconut milk, reduced to 1/3 cup (Reducing instructions below)
Seeds scraped from 1 split vanilla bean or 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt

Whole almonds for decorating

INSTRUCTIONS

Make your cupcakes (can be made up to 2 days in advance): Preheat oven to 400F. Prepare a muffin pan with lines.

In the top part of a double boiler over very hot, but not simmering, water, or in a microwave at medium power, melt the chocolate. Remove from the heat or the oven, and let stand, stirring often, until cool.

Beat the butter in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle blade on medium-high speed until smooth, about 1 minute. On low speed, beat in the confectioners' sugar. Return the speed to medium-high and beat until light in color and texture, about 2 minutes. Beat in the egg yolks, one at a time, scraping down the sides of the bowl. Beat in the chocolate and vanilla.

Beat the egg whites and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on high speed just until they form soft, shiny peaks. Do not overbeat. Stir about one fourth of the beaten whites into the chocolate mixture to lighten it, then fold in the remaining whites, leaving a few visible wisps of whites. Sift half of the flour over the chocolate mixture, and fold in with a rubber spatula. Repeat with the remaining flour.

Fill the lined muffin cups three-quarters full, being careful not to overfill. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cupcake comes out clean, about 20-22 minutes. Cool the cupcakes in the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Once cool, prepare your filling, by mixing together untoasted coconut and cream of coconut. This should be the consistency of the inside of a Almond Joy / Mounds / Bounty candy bar.

To make the frosting: First, make your reduced coconut milk: Bring coconut milk to boil in large deep saucepan over medium-high heat (coconut milk will boil up high in pan). Reduce heat to medium-low; boil until reduced to 1/2 cup (you will only need 1/3 cup for the recipe), stirring occasionally, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from heat; cool completely. Transfer to small bowl. Cover and chill. Can be made 2 days ahead and kept chilled.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat butter until smooth. Add sugar, 1/3 cup reduced coconut milk, seeds from vanilla bean, and salt. Beat on medium-low speed until blended, scraping down sides of bowl. Increase to medium-high and beat until light and fluffy.

To assemble: 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 filling and top with the disk of cake. Pipe frosting onto cooled cupcakes. Sprinkle with coconut and decorate with a whole almond. Just before serving drizzle with a little bit of chocolate sauce.