

CHOCOLATE VANILLA POLKA DOT BIRTHDAY CAKE

INGREDIENTS

for the Vanilla "dots"

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoons table salt
1 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter, softened but slightly cool, cut into 12 pieces
3 large eggs
3/4 cups milk
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

for the chocolate cake

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 chocolate frosting

1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks), Softened to room temperature
3 1/2 cups confectioners (powdered) sugar
1/2 cup cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon table salt
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

for the decorations

9 Ferrero Rocher "Rond Noir" Chocolates
Cocopuffs (yes, really)

You will also need: a "Cake Round" or "Cake Pop" pan to make the "dots"

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350F. Spray your cake pop pan with cooking spray (top and bottom pieces).

In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar on low speed. Add the butter, 1 piece at a time, and combine until the mixture resembles coarse sand. Add the eggs, 1 at time, and mix until fully combined. Add the milk and the vanilla extract, increase the speed to medium, and mix until the batter is light, fluffy and free of lumps.

Fill into the bottom half of your cake pop pan, being careful not to overfill. Secure the top part of the cake pop pan per manufacturer's directions (I have to use binder clips to hold mine together!) Bake 22-25 minutes. Do not be alarmed if a little batter comes out the top -- it is designed to do this. Cool the cake pops in the pan for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

While the cake pop "dots" are cooling, make your chocolate cake batter. Keep the oven on 350F and prepare two 8-inch spring form pans with cooking spray.

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.

Place approximately half an inch of batter in each spring form pan. Then, remove the cake pops from their pan and place 6-8 in each pan, then cover/surround them with the remaining batter. The batter should just cover the cake pops. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cupcake comes out clean, about 35-40 minutes. Cool the cakes in the pans for 20 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

For the frosting, cream butter for a few minutes in a mixer with the paddle attachment on medium speed. Turn off the mixer. Sift 3 cups powdered sugar and cocoa into the mixing bowl. Turn your mixer on the lowest speed until the sugar and cocoa are absorbed by the butter. Increase mixer speed to medium and add vanilla extract, and salt and beat for 3 minutes. If your frosting needs a more stiff consistency, add a little more sugar. If your frosting needs to be thinned out, add a little bit of milk 1 tablespoon at a time.

Place cake round onto plate or cake stand and frost bottom layer, placing second round on top (bottom side up to create a flat surface). Frost cake all over and then pipe frosting onto cake and decorate as desired, in my case with Rond Noir chocolates and Cocopuffs. Refrigerate until ready to serve.