

CHOCOLATE CHERRY BLOSSOM 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 cherry whipped cream filling

1/2 cup jarred pitted sour cherries, pureed
5 tablespoons granulated white sugar, divided
1 tablespoon corn starch, mixed with 2 tablespoons cold water
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon whipped cream stabilizer

For the ganache and decoration

9 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Small fondant or sugar cherry blossoms (I used 4 on each cupcake)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400F. Prepare a muffin pan with liners.

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.

While the cupcakes are cooling, make your cherry cream filling and chocolate butter cream frosting. For the filling, combine pureed cherries with sugar in a small sauce pan. Heat over medium heat until the sugar is dissolved. Add the corn starch slurry and bring back to a full boil, stirring constantly. Once at a full boil and the cherry sauce thickens, remove from the heat and let cool completely. In a large mixing bowl place the whipping cream, vanilla extract, and sugar and stir to combine. Cover with plastic wrap and place the bowl and wire whisk in the refrigerator for one hour. Then beat the mixture until stiff peaks form. Gently fold in the cherry mixture, avoiding handling too much as it will deflate.

To make the ganache, place the chocolate into a medium bowl. Heat the cream in a small sauce pan over medium heat. Bring just to a boil, watching very carefully because if it boils for a few seconds, it will boil

out of the pot. When the cream has come to a boil, pour over the chopped chocolate, and whisk until smooth. Add in tablespoons of butter, one at a time.

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 cherry cream and top with the disk of cake. Dip cupcakes into the chocolate ganache, and decorate with the flowers. Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes.