

COCONUT PECAN CREAM CHRISTMAS CUPCAKES

(recipe based on ATK's Italian Cream Cake)

INGREDIENTS

for the cupcakes

2 cups sweetened shredded coconut, toasted
1 cup buttermilk, room temperature
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups (10 ounces) cake flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
12 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 12 pieces and softened
4 tablespoons vegetable shortening, cut into 4 pieces
1 3/4 cups (12 1/4 ounces) sugar
5 large eggs, room temperature
2 cups (8 ounces) pecans, toasted and chopped

For the frosting

12 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
2 1/4 cups (9 ounces) confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup cream of coconut
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
pinch salt
16 ounces cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces and softened

INSTRUCTIONS

For the cupcakes: Preheat oven to 350F. Prepare a standard 12-slot cupcake/muffin tin with paper liners. Reserve 1/2 cup of the toasted coconut for garnish and process remaining coconut in food processor until finely ground, about 1 minute. Combine coconut, buttermilk, and vanilla in 2-cup liquid measuring cup and let sit until coconut is slightly softened, about 10 minutes; reserve.

Combine flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in bowl. Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat butter, shortening, and sugar on medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, and beat until combined. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture in 3 additions, alternating with 2 additions of reserved coconut-buttermilk mixture, scraping down bowl as needed. Add 3/4 cup pecans and give batter final stir by hand.

Divide batter into prepared pan, filling each liner to approximate 2/3 full. Bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 16 to 18 minutes. Cool cupcakes in pans on wire rack for 10 minutes, before removing to a wire rack to cool completely, about 1 hour.

For the frosting: Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, mix butter and sugar on low speed until combined, about 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium-high and beat until pale and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add cream of coconut, vanilla, and salt and beat until smooth, about 30 seconds. Add cream cheese, one piece at a time, and beat until incorporated, about 1 minute. Refrigerate until ready to use.

When cupcakes are cooled, spread pipe or spread with the frosting. Decorate as desired. Sprinkle with remaining toasted pecans and coconut. Refrigerate until 30 minutes before serving.