

Red Velvet Halloween Cupcakes with a Dulce de Leche Surprise and Vanilla Frosting

Makes 12

Ingredients

75g unsalted butter
150g caster sugar
2 medium eggs
1 tsp red food colouring
2 tsp vanilla extract
15g cocoa powder
125ml buttermilk
175g plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 tsp white wine vinegar

Filling and Frosting

1 jar dulce de leche
150g unsalted butter
400g icing sugar
3 tsp vanilla extract
1/2-1 tsp orange food colouring
Halloween sprinkles

Method

- To make these incredible halloween cupcakes, preheat your oven to gas mark 4/180c. Line a muffin tin with 12 halloween themed muffin cases. Beat together the butter and sugar in a large bowl and add the eggs then beat again. In a small bowl mix the red food colouring and vanilla extract together to make a paste, then add this to the sugar and butter mixture, mixing well.
- Next mix in the cocoa powder and pour in half the buttermilk, mix well. Now mix in half the flour and remaining buttermilk and mix. Now add the final half of flour and mix well again. Finally mix in the baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and vinegar until you have a smooth mixture. Spoon evenly into the muffin cases. Bake for 20-25 minutes until they are well risen and springy to the touch. Insert a skewer if you are not too sure to make sure they are cooked. Leave to cool completely.
- Cream the butter in a large bowl and in additions sift in the icing sugar until you have a pipeable frosting. Now mix in the vanilla extract and orange food colouring until you get the colour you want, then place the frosting in a piping bag fitted with whichever nozzle you like.

- Cut a hole in the centre of each cupcake but keep the tops. Spoon in 1.5 tsp of dulce de leche and replace the tops. Pipe a swirl of frosting on each cupcake and then sprinkle over some Halloween sprinkles. Top with a pumpkin topper if you like and serve with a cup of tea for a spookily delicious Halloween treat.

Cauliflower Cheese Soup

Serves 6

Ingredients

1 large onion-finely chopped
1 large (1kg) cauliflower-cut into florets
1 large potato-peeled and cut into chunks
700ml vegetable stock
600ml whole milk
250g grated strong cheddar cheese
Black pepper
Butter

Method

- To make this divine soup, heat the butter in a large saucepan and tip in the onion and cook until softened. Add the cauliflower, potato, stock, milk and season with black pepper. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat and leave to simmer for 30 minutes or until the cauliflower and potato are cooked.
- Blitz with a blender until you get a creamy soup. Thin with more milk (warmed) if it is a little thick. Stir in the cheese allowing it to melt before serving with homemade bread for a yummy autumnal lunch.

Cinnamon Apple and Blackberry Pie

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

3-4 cooking apples-peeled, cored and chunked

300g blackberries

100g caster sugar

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 lemon

Pastry

200g unsalted butter

50g caster sugar

3 egg yolks

375g plain flour

1 egg-whisked for egg wash

Method

- First of all, make your pastry. Rub the butter and flour together, then add the sugar and egg yolks and bring together to form a soft pastry dough. Chill for 30 minutes. In a saucepan cook the apples and blackberries with the sugar until almost cooked, then leave to cool. Once the pastry has chilled, preheat your oven to gas mark 4/180c.
- Split the pastry into two pieces, one slightly larger than the other. Roll the bigger piece out on a floured surface to fit your pie dish slightly overhanging and line the dish. Place the apples and blackberries into the lined pie dish.
- Now roll out the other piece of pastry on a floured surface to fit your pie dish. Brush the overhanging pastry with egg wash and place the other piece of pastry on top. Crimp anyway you like and add any pastry decorations you choose. I love making pastry leaves.
- Poke a few holes in the top of the pie, then brush with egg wash, then sprinkle over some caster sugar and bake for around 45 minutes until the filling is bubbling and the pastry is golden. Serve with homemade custard for a truly scrumptious autumnal pudding.

Shopping list for all 3 recipes

Check your cupboards first as you may have a lot of these already

425g unsalted butter
300g caster sugar
6 eggs
Red and orange food colouring
Vanilla extract
Cocoa powder
125ml buttermilk
550g plain flour
Baking powder/bicarbonate of soda
White wine vinegar
Dulce de leche
400g icing sugar
Halloween sprinkles
1 large onion/1 large potato
900g cauliflower
700ml vegetable stock
600ml whole milk
250g strong cheddar
4 cooking apples
300g blackberries
Ground cinnamon
1 lemon