

Bloody Eyeball Cupcakes

Start to finish: 1 1/2 hours
(30 minutes active)

Servings: 12

For the cupcakes:

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

For the filling:

6 tablespoons seedless raspberry jam
4 drops red food coloring
3 tablespoons light corn syrup

For the frosting:

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 cups powdered sugar
1 1/2 tablespoons milk
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon table salt
15 drops white food coloring (optional)

To decorate:

12 small red gum balls
Two 0.75-ounce tubes red decorating gel

To make the cupcakes, adjust an oven rack to the middle position. Heat the oven to 350 F. Lightly coat two 6-cup muffin tins with baking spray. Alternatively, coat the tins with cooking spray, then dust with flour and tap to remove any excess.

In a large bowl, use an electric mixer on low to combine the flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Add the butter, a piece at a time, and beat until the mixture resembles coarse sand, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, and mix until combined. Add the milk and vanilla, then increase speed to medium, and mix until light and fluffy and no lumps remain, about 3 minutes.

Fill the muffin cups three-quarters full (do not overfill) with batter. Bake until a toothpick inserted at the center comes out clean, about 18 to 20 minutes. Cool the cupcakes in the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

To make the filling, in a small bowl whisk together the jam, food coloring and corn syrup. Set aside.

When the cupcakes have cooled, cut a cone of cake out of the center of each. To do this, insert the tip of a paring knife at a 45-degree angle about 1/8 inch from the top edge of the cupcake and cut all the way around the top (cutting about 3/4 inch into the cupcake). Remove the cone of cake from the center. Cut away all but the top 1/4 inch of the cones, leaving only small disks of cake. Set aside.

To fill the cupcakes, spoon about 1/2 tablespoon of the filling into the cavity of each cupcake. Gently place the disks of cupcake over the filling, being careful not to press too hard. You do not want the filling to ooze out.

To make the frosting, in a large bowl use an electric mixer on high to beat the butter until light and fluffy, about 30 seconds. Slow the mixer to low and add the powdered sugar, 1/2 cup at a time, and mix until combined. Increase the mixer to high and beat until pale and fluffy, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to medium and add the milk, vanilla and salt. Increase speed to high and beat until fluffy, about another 30 seconds. If desired, beat in white food coloring.

Spread a generous amount of the frosting over each cupcake, being careful not to detach the top disk of cake. Place one gum ball in the frosting at the center of each cupcake to form the pupil. Use the red decorating gel to draw veins in the frosting radiating outward from the pupil.

The cupcake portion of the recipe is from "The America's Test Kitchen Family Baking Book," America's Test Kitchen, 2008

J.M. Hirsch, The Associated Press

