

APPLE CARAMEL CUPCAKES

(MAKES 12-16)

INGREDIENTS:

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| 6 tbsp unsalted butter, softened | ¼ tsp salt |
| 1½ cups caster sugar | 2 large eggs |
| 2½ cups plain flour | 2 granny smith apples |
| 1½ tsp ground cinnamon | 1 cup whole milk |
| 1 tsp baking powder | |

For the buttercream frosting:

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| 2 cups icing sugar |
| 2/3 cups unsalted butter, softened |
| 3½ tbsp whole milk |
| 1/3 cup plus 1 tbsp dulce de leche or similar caramel sauce |

METHOD:

- 1) Preheat oven to 350°F (190°C), and line your cupcake tin with baking cups.
- 2) Beat together butter, sugar, flour, baking powder, salt and cinnamon (on low speed if using an electric mixer) until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
- 3) In a separate bowl, whisk milk and eggs together by hand until combined then pour about ¾ of this into flour mixture. Combine wet and dry ingredients by beating slowly at first, then increasing speed until batter is thick and smooth. Make sure you incorporate the bits of mixture sticking to the bowl's sides too! Now add in last quarter of milk/egg mixture and finish beating batter into a smooth consistency. This may look runnier than you'd expect, but have faith!
- 4) Peel, core and chop apples roughly into **1cm cubes**. The total weight of apple pieces should come to around **200g (7oz)** but don't worry too much. Stir your apple pieces into the cake batter.
- 5) Spoon batter into the baking cups, filling them about two-thirds full. If you have any leftover batter, line another cupcake/muffin tin and make a few "cook's extras." (Keep them to yourself and devour quietly when no one's looking.)
- 6) Bake the cupcakes for 18-20 minutes, or until they bounce back when gently pressed.
- 7) When cooked, remove from oven and leave to cool in the tin for a little while before turning them out and setting onto a baking rack. It's tempting, but don't try frosting these delicious cupcakes until they've *completely* cooled!
- 8) Now, about that frosting. Beat together icing sugar and butter on a low speed until combined. (If you start mixing at full speed, most of the icing sugar will end up a mushroom cloud in your kitchen), Gradually add in the **50ml** milk and keep beating, on a higher speed now if you're feeling impatient, until light and fluffy. Add in the caramel sauce and beat well. (You could also make this buttercream frosting using a teaspoon of vanilla extract, or maybe a half teaspoon of ground cinnamon or ginger as an alternative to the caramel. Yum!)
- 9) Once cupcakes have cooled, you can either pipe the buttercream frosting onto them, or for a more rustic look, simply use a palette knife (a butter knife works just as well) to slather the cakes with a luscious crown of caramel frosting. You could even decorate them with a few sprinkles, or maybe fondant flowers...if you can resist eating them for long enough.

Enjoy!

COMING JULY 29!

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