

CRANBERRY CUPCAKES WITH WHITE CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM

This is a simple but delicious alternative to Christmas cake. The cupcakes look pretty and very festive so are fantastic for parties – but good enough to enjoy as a teatime treat at any time of year!

MAKES ABOUT 24

MAKING TIME

25 minutes

BAKING TIME

12 minutes

250 g unsalted butter, softened
250 g caster sugar
grated zest of 1 orange
4 large eggs, lightly beaten
250 g self-raising flour
5 tbsp semi-skimmed milk
100 g dried cranberries
24 fresh cranberries, to decorate, or
sugar-paste holly decorations

For the orange soak (optional)

2 tbsp icing sugar
juice of 1 orange

For the white chocolate buttercream

450 g icing sugar, sifted
100 g unsalted butter, softened
50 ml semi-skimmed milk
1 tsp vanilla extract
100 g white chocolate, melted in
a bowl over a pan of simmering water



These freeze really well so make a batch in advance and pop them (un-iced) into the freezer, ready for unexpected guests at Christmas. Wait until they have fully defrosted before decorating.

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) and line two 12-hole muffin trays with paper cases.

2 Cream together the butter, sugar and orange zest – for really light cupcakes always use a balloon whisk or the whisk attachment on your electric mixer. Add the eggs, roughly one egg at a time, whisking after each addition.

3 Once the eggs are well combined, gradually sift in the flour and gently fold in with a large metal spoon (taking extra care to fold gently to keep all the air in the mixture).

4 Fold in the milk and the dried cranberries and then spoon the mixture into the prepared cases. Bake in the preheated oven for about 12 minutes or until golden and springy to the touch.

5 I often add a soak to my cupcakes to make them extra moist and scrumptious. While the cupcakes are in the oven, whisk together the icing sugar and orange juice. Remove the cupcakes from the oven and while they are still warm, use a cocktail stick to make a few holes in each cupcake. Pour 2 teaspoons of the orange soak over each cupcake and leave to cool in their tins.

6 Make the buttercream. Put the icing sugar in a bowl with the (very soft) butter, milk and vanilla extract. Beat well, ideally with an electric mixer or an electric hand-held mixer; if you are beating by hand then use a wooden spoon and beat until really fluffy. Fold in the melted white chocolate and beat again.

7 Spread or pipe the buttercream on to the cooled cupcakes and decorate each one with a fresh cranberry or sugar-paste decorations.