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KITCHEN STORIES

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Cookies N' Cream Owl Cupcakes

source: 6bittersweets.com | makes 15-17 cupcakes

INGREDIENTS

Cookies N' Cream Cupcakes (Recipe below)
Chocolate Ganache Frosting (Recipe below)
30-34 Oreo, Newman-O, or other chocolate cream-filled cookies
30-34 chocolate-covered mints (Junior Mints)
15-17 candy-coated chocolates (M&Ms)

For Cookies N' Cream Cupcakes

1 cup soy milk [or regular milk]
1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/3 cup canola oil
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract, or more vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup cocoa powder, Dutch-processed or regular
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup chopped Oreo, Newman-O, or other chocolate cream-filled cookies
(about 8-10 cookies)

For Chocolate Ganache Frosting

1/2 cup heavy cream
5 ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
[or use a combination of semisweet and bittersweet]
1-2 tablespoons corn syrup

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DIRECTIONS

To make the cupcakes:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F and line 2 muffin pans with baking liners.

Whisk together the soy milk and vinegar in a large bowl, and set aside for a few minutes to curdle. Add the sugar, oil, vanilla extract, and almond extract, if using, to the soy milk mixture and beat until foamy. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Add in two batches to wet ingredients and beat until no large lumps remain (a few tiny lumps are OK). Gently fold in chopped cookies.

Fill liners 3/4 full with batter. Bake 18 to 20 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Transfer to a cooling rack and let cool completely.

To make the ganache frosting:

Combine the chocolate and cream in a medium, microwave-safe bowl. Try to submerge the chocolate as much as possible, but it's okay to have some above the cream. Microwave the mixture on medium for 1 minute. Stir and heat again in 15-second increments, stirring thoroughly each time, until fully melted. Stir in corn syrup. Let this cool and thicken (in the fridge if needed) before using. If it cools too much, reheat in the microwave at 5-second intervals until it softens to the consistency you want.

To make the owls:

Split the sandwich cookies in half crosswise, keeping the cream side hole (microwaving 5 cookies at a time for 3-5 seconds helps to keep the cream side solid). [I found my frosting spatula split the cookies most cleanly.] Use the dull side of a paring knife to remove any excess crumbs from cream filling and to smooth the sides of filling that has shifted during splitting.

Collect the remaining sides of the cookies without cream to use for the ears. Make 2 parallel cuts with a serrated knife in these cookies 1/2 inch from each rounded side, discarding the 1/2 inch strip that remains from the center of the cookie.

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Pair up the cream sided cookie halves so that those with similar amounts of cream are together. Gently push Junior Mints into the cream of each, but don't push too hard or you'll squish the mint. (Play around with different positions to give each "owl" its own expression and personality)

Use a small spoon or spatula to smooth chocolate ganache frosting onto the tops of the cooled cupcakes. Place the cream sided cookies, cream side up, on the middle of the cupcakes, making sure that the eyes are oriented the way you want. Push gently to make sure they've adhered to the frosting.

To make the ears, attach the cut cream-less cookies to the cupcakes above the "eyes", textured side facing up and round edges inward. These should hang over the edge of the cupcakes, but be sure to press them into the frosting where possible to make sure they adhere well.

Lastly, press M&M candies [standing them up on their sides] between and slightly below the cookie "eyes" as beaks.