Carrot Cupcakes with Caramelized White Chocolate Frosting

Makes 18

For the Cupcakes:

3 eggs
1 cup brown sugar, packed
½ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 tsp. vanilla
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. fine sea salt
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1 ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
2 cups grated carrots
rind of one orange, finely grated

Pre-heat your oven to 350° Fahrenheit. In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs and the sugars until well combined. Add the oil, whisk again. Add the vanilla, whisk again. And again.

Combine the dry ingredients in another small bowl, then dump into the wet ingredients. Stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula until just combined., then add the carrots, orange rind and mix until well combined.

Line cupcake tins with paper liners and fill ¾ full with batter. Put in oven and bake about 15 minutes, or until the tops bounce back to the touch, or a toothpick comes out clean.

Let cool – I always get them out of the baking pan right away, so they don't keep cooking from the residual heat.

To Caramelize White Chocolate:

16 oz. high quality white, couverture, chocolate (You will need a good one with about 30% cocoa butter. DO NOT use "coating chocolate", chips or anything found in a craft store.)

Set your oven to 250° Fahrenheit. If your chocolate is in block form, chop it. If it is in pistoles, or little buttons – woo hoo, no need to chop! Spread the chocolate in a rimmed baking sheet. Put in the oven.

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After twenty minutes, stir it about and spread evenly in the pan. Do this every ten minutes for the next 60 to 90 minutes. During this process, the chocolate will get lumpy, chalky, and down-right ugly, but just keep turning and spreading. Eventually you will get something smooth and caramel colored. David Lebovitz calls for you to look for the color of natural peanut butter to know when it's done. Then just let it cool.

You can store it at room temperature for a couple of months. For the frosting recipe I only used 12 oz. of the final product. When I figure out what I'm going to do with the little bit left, I'll let you know.

For the Frosting:

12 oz. caramelized white chocolate
4 oz. butter (I used unsalted European style, then added ¼ tsp. salt)
2 cups powdered sugar
3 to 4 tbsp. milk

In the bowl of a mixer, whip together the butter and caramelized white chocolate. Add the powdered sugar and 2 tablespoons of the milk. Whip with a whisk until smooth. Add more milk, if necessary, to achieve a fluffy, spreadable frosting.

I found that if I whipped too much, it just started thickening up and I had to add more milk. I guess something about the chocolate does something when whipped. I don't know what or why. Our usual answer around here is "It's chocolate", while throwing our hands in the air

So, frost those cupcakes however you know how. If you're fancy and can wield a piping bag, go for it. Otherwise, just spread it on with a knife – it's all good.

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