

Published June 21st, 2023

Create a delicious summer garden with these fun sunflower cupcakes

By Susie Inventosch



Sunflower Chocolate Cupcakes Photo Susie Inventosch

Our friend Mariela has a beautiful website called The Hungry Dragonfly, and while she creates all sorts of savory, sweet and vegan recipes, she is a fantastic cake decorator. Recently, she posted a video of how to make these fun sunflower cupcakes using her favorite buttercream frosting. We fell in love with them, especially since we had wild sunflowers blooming all over our neighborhood for the past month or so. I have to admit, I'm still a novice when it comes to using cake decorating tips successfully, but I think these turned out pretty well and they looked so cute up against our real sunflowers in the garden. We used our favorite chocolate cake recipe for these cupcakes along with Mariela's buttercream frosting, and they were delicious.

When it comes to cake decorating, there are many different tips available. For these flowers, I used a #352 leaf tip for both the petals and the leaves. Also, you want to make sure your frosting is not too hot or too

cold. We were having a heat spell when I made these, so I had to keep putting the cupcakes in the refrigerator in between the different layers of petals. I did the same thing with the frosting, but had to be careful not to get it too cold or too firm. It takes a little bit of practice, but you'll get the hang of it. I like to point the tip so that the first circle of petals is vertical and the second circle of petals is horizontal, which makes the flowers look nice and full.

The center of the sunflower is made from crushed Oreo Cookies, and you simply take a little frosting and spread it in the center of the cupcake and then immediately dip the top in the crushed cookies. Be sure to leave at least a quarter-inch edge of the top of the cupcake with no frosting or cookie crumbs. I inadvertently covered the entire top of the cupcake with frosting and crumbs at first, but the yellow petals did not adhere very well. I had to scrape some off to leave a cake edge around the top of the cupcake. Learning from my mistake, be sure to have just plain cupcake around the very outside circle of the cupcake.

You will need two bakery piping bags and two leaf cake decorating tips (#352 is a good one for this) with complementary couplers for decorating these cupcakes with the sunflowers. All of these should be available at your local craft store and you can certainly order them online. Wilton is a great line of cake decorating supplies.

I really like using gel food coloring best, and you can get a variety of colors at Michael's, Hobby Lobby or on Amazon. We mixed our yellow with a little bit of orange to try to match the color of the real flowers in our garden. You can certainly use regular liquid food coloring too, but you can get a much larger variety of colors in the gels. Wilton offers a nice set of 12 different colors for \$16.99, (see link) and from that you can make nearly any color you like for future baking projects, too. They are also available on Amazon.

If you have any questions as you make your sunflower cupcakes, please be sure to email me and I'll do my best to help you make some beautiful, festive sunflower cupcakes!

Sunflower Chocolate Cupcakes

(Makes 24 regular cupcakes)

Frosting

INGREDIENTS

1 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature (2 sticks or 8 oz.)

4 cups powdered sugar, sifted

1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. cream of tartar

2 tbsp. heavy cream or milk

1 tsp. Vanilla

Gel food coloring in yellow and green (and maybe orange if you like a more golden yellow)

DIRECTIONS

Sift powdered sugar with salt and cream of tartar. Set aside.

Place the butter in the bowl of your standing mixer and using the paddle attachment, beat butter for 3-5 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Beat in vanilla. Gradually add powdered sugar alternately with milk or cream, and continue until you have the consistency you like for your frosting. I always save a little extra powdered sugar aside in case the frosting gets too soft.

Dye one quarter of the frosting green and three quarters of the frosting yellow. Use the yellow to spread on top of the cupcake and for the sunflower petals and the green for the leaves.

Cupcakes

INGREDIENTS

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups granulated sugar

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

2 cups cold water

1 cup canola oil

2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup bittersweet chocolate chips

1 cup pulverized Oreo Cookies (for the center of the flowers)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

Line cupcake tin with cute cupcake liners that are appropriate for the occasion. Lightly spray the inside of the liners with cooking spray. We used green and yellow liners for these sunflower cupcakes. You will either need a cupcake tin that holds 24 or use two tins with 12 each. You can make half a recipe, too, if you only want 12 cupcakes or you can bake these in two batches if you only have one tin. (The frosting stores well in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks.)

Place all dries (flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt) in a large mixing bowl. Blend well with a wire whisk.

Add oil, water and vanilla to dries and mix well to incorporate. Stir in chocolate chips.

Divide batter evenly among the prepared cupcake tins. Bake for about 15 minutes, or until the tops of the cupcakes hold their shape when you gently push with your finger. (Using a cake tester is tough because the chocolate chips will remain gooey until the cupcakes are completely cooled.) Remove from oven and cool completely before frosting.

When ready to frost, spread a little circle of frosting in the center top of each cupcake and then immediately invert the cupcake into the bowl of crushed Oreos. Set each cupcake aside after doing the Oreo centers.

Working around the edge of each cupcake, use the yellow frosting with the leaf tip to make your petals. I like to make vertical petals all the way around the edge, and follow up with horizontal petals just inside of that. When you're happy with your yellow petals, make a few green leaves here and there. Store in an airtight container and refrigerate frosted cupcakes until ready to serve.

Find Mariela's creations on Instagram

@thehungrydragonfly Or, her website:

<https://thehungrydragonfly.com/2023/05/30/the-best-buttercream-frosting/>

How to make frosting leaves: <https://youtu.be/Bw1X8NOR19k>

How to make sunflower petals: <https://wilton.com/how-to-pipe-a-sunflower/wltech-139/#:~:text=Switch%20to%20a%20bag%20fitted,to%20create%20a%20fuller%20look.>

Wilton 12-piece Food Coloring Gel set: <https://wilton.com/edible-gel-food-coloring-set-for-baking-and-decorating-6-oz-12-piece-set/191007589/>





Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

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