



Five-Ingredient Romanian "Amandine" Cocoa Cupcakes

By Dylan Sabuco

Prep Time 10 / **Cook Time** 15 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

mix: to thoroughly combine two or more ingredients until uniform in texture.

Equipment

- Oven
- Muffin pan
- Paper cupcake liners
- Medium mixing bowl
- Small mixing bowl
- Dry measuring cups
- Whisk
- Potato masher or wooden spoon
- Toothpicks or knife to test for doneness

Ingredients

Five-Ingredient Romanian "Amandine" Cocoa Cupcakes

- 2 bananas, as ripe as possible ******(for BANANA ALLERGY sub 1 8-oz can crushed pineapple OR 1 C sweetened applesauce)******
- 1/2 C sunflower seed butter, like SunButter brand
- 1 T cocoa powder ******(for CHOCOLATE ALLERGY sub carob powder)******
- 2 tsp baking powder

□ 3/4 C all-purpose flour ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour)******

Food Allergen Substitutions

Five-Ingredient Romanian "Amandine" Cocoa Cupcakes

Banana: For 2 bananas, substitute 1 8-oz can crushed pineapple OR 1 C sweetened applesauce.

Chocolate: Substitute carob powder for cocoa powder.

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour.

Instructions

Five-Ingredient Romanian "Amandine" Cocoa Cupcakes

intro

"Bună ziua" (BOON-ah ZEE-wah) or "Hello" in Romanian! "Amandine" describes a chocolatey Romanian cake often filled with chocolate mousse. The following recipe takes a simplified and healthier approach to the traditional recipe. You will replace a few things like butter, sugar, and eggs with bananas and sunflower seed butter. The texture will be more brownie-like than the traditional "amandine" recipe, but it will be just as tasty and way better for your body.

preheat

Preheat your oven to 375 F.

measure + mix

Measure **1 tablespoon cocoa powder**, **2 teaspoons baking powder**, and **3/4 cup flour** into a medium mixing bowl. Mix the ingredients with a whisk until well combined.

mash + stir

In a small mixing bowl, peel and mash **2 ripe bananas** with **1/2 cup sunflower seed butter**. Continue mashing until there are very few lumps. Stir this mixture into the dry ingredient mixture.

bake + cool

Pour the batter into lined muffin pan wells using a 1/4 measuring cup to scoop up the batter. Bake the cupcakes for 12 to 15 minutes or until they are fully baked and tested with a clean toothpick or knife. Cool for at least 5 minutes before adding frosting, or eat them plain for a tasty and healthy breakfast snack.

"Poftă bună" (POHF-tah BOON-ah) or "Enjoy" (literally, "good appetite") in Romanian!

Featured Ingredient: Chocolate + Cocoa!

Hi! I'm Chocolate!

"Hello! Let me introduce myself! I can be dark brown, light brown, or even white. I'm sometimes bitter, sometimes a little sweet, and often very sweet. I add flavor and excitement to many other foods! Have you guessed yet? I'm Chocolate! You may be familiar with me from candy bars or chocolate sundaes, but I can live up many other foods, too, including chili, butter, and milk!"

History

The cacao (kahKOW) tree is native to equatorial South America and the rainforests of Mesoamerica. It was first used 5,300 years ago by indigenous people in South America. Mesoamericans who lived in the rainforests of Mexico and Central America domesticated the tree about 1,500 years later. They drank chocolate as a bitter beverage—far from the sweet treat most of us are familiar with today.

The Mayan people of Central and South America used cocoa as currency and as medicine: it was very valuable, just like vanilla! In fact, it was so precious that they made counterfeit cocoa beans out of clay and avocado seeds!

The Aztec people are a nomadic tribe in Northern Mexico. When the Aztec empire began to expand, they demanded that the Mayan people pay tribute to them through gifts of cacao.

The Aztec people ruled until Spaniards arrived and conquered the land and its people. The Spanish explorers took cacao beans back to Europe, where they experimented by adding cinnamon and sugar to sweeten it. For a long time, only aristocratic people enjoyed chocolate.

Princess Maria Theresa married Louis the 16th from France and gave him chocolate as a wedding present! Demand for chocolate soon grew very fast, and as a result, people were enslaved on plantations to grow cacao to meet the high demand.

In 1847, Joseph Fry invented the first chocolate bar. By 1907, Hershey was manufacturing millions of chocolate kisses each day.

Cacao trees grow best in the rainforest underneath the branches of taller trees. However, they won't bear fruit until they are at least three to five years old.

Most early Spanish sources refer to chocolate as "cacahuatl" (cah-cah-Hwat), which translates to "cacao water."

The word chocolate comes from a combination of a Mayan word for hot, "chocol," and an Aztec word for water, "atl."

How Chocolate is Made

All chocolate comes from the beans of the cacao tree. Cacao trees produce pods containing pulp-covered seeds. Before cacao is processed, it would be hard for most of us to recognize it as chocolate! This is because the pulp-covered seeds taste bitter and raw and look nothing like the chocolate products we see in stores.

The seeds go through a process called fermentation, and then they are dried and made into nibs before being turned into chocolate.

A cacao pod contains about 30 to 50 almond-sized seeds—enough to make about seven milk chocolate candy bars!

After roasting and grinding cocoa beans, chocolate liquor is left, which is about equal parts cocoa solids and cocoa butter. After the cocoa butter is mostly extracted, the result is dry cocoa solids. Cocoa powder is the powdered form. Natural cocoa is a light brown color and tastes bitter.

Dutch chemist Coenraad van Houten created the "Dutch process" method in the early 19th century to reduce the acidity in natural cocoa powder by treating the beans with alkaline salts. As a result, Dutch process cocoa is less bitter and has a dark brown color.

How to Enjoy Cocoa & Chocolate

You can add unsweetened cocoa to milk with sugar, honey, or stevia for a delicious and warming beverage. You can also add it to smoothies for a delicious chocolaty taste and an extra hit of magnesium and polyphenols.

Chocolate comes in many forms: bars, kisses, chips, powder, shavings, puddings, syrups, and sauces. Unconventional chocolate flavor pairings: cardamom, lavender, wasabi, chili, chipotle, sea salt, lime, matcha, curry, ginger, mint, figs, fennel, sesame, parmesan, and Earl Grey tea. Seriously, what doesn't go well with chocolate?! Can you think of any other fun and delicious pairings?

Nutrition

Dark chocolate helps protect your heart, blood, and brain! To get the full health benefits of chocolate, choose at least 85% cocoa content or higher. The higher percentage makes the chocolate more bitter, but those bitter compounds, called polyphenols, are antioxidants that provide several health benefits. Many people prefer very dark chocolate!

Polyphenols help prevent heart disease by maintaining healthy blood pressure levels, keeping vessels flexible and allowing the blood in our body to flow easier (good circulation), and reducing inflammation. In addition, they help control blood sugar levels, lower cancer risk, and boost immunity. Polyphenols also promote good digestion.

Cocoa is a great source of magnesium. We need magnesium for good health! For strong bones, healthy teeth, and as a building block for proteins within the body.

Cocoa can protect our teeth?! Cacao contains antibacterial elements that fight tooth decay. However, this is true with unsweetened cocoa only, as most mass-produced chocolate has a lot of sugar. We know what sugar does to our teeth—it causes decay!

One study has shown that the smell of chocolate may actually relax you by increasing theta waves in the

brain!