

## **Christmas Tree Hi-Hats with Hidden Presents**

I'd suggest making the icing before the cakes to give it time to cool and thicken.

**Espresso Bourbon Chocolate Cupcakes** (from Tea with Bea, Recipes from Bea's of Bloombury)

### **Ingredients**

225g unsalted butter  
4 shots of good espresso  
110g cocoa powder  
200g caster sugar  
220g dark brown soft sugar  
2 eggs  
45ml Bourbon  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
280g plain flour  
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
100g soft sweets (optional - for hidden presents)

Makes about 20 cupcakes.

### **Method**

1. Preheat oven to 170 degrees C (Gas mark 5)
2. Melt the butter in a large saucepan
3. Stir in espresso and cocoa powder
4. Add sugars and eggs and whisk thoroughly
5. Sift the flour twice into a mixing bowl with the bicarbonate of soda and salt
6. Slowly pour the espresso mixture into the flour and stir until combined. The mixture should be very liquidy.
7. Put the mixture into a cake tin and bake for about 20 minutes. A skewer should come out with almost nothing attached from the middle of the cake when it is done.

Optional hidden presents: when the cakes are cool use a teaspoon to scoop out a small circle of cake. Fill with soft sweets - I used dolly mixture but mini smarties or marshmallows would be good.

## **Italian Meringue Chocolate Buttercream**

### **Ingredients**

200g caster sugar  
75g water  
80g egg whites (at room temperature)  
225g unsalted butter (softened)  
75g cocoa powder  
50g desiccated coconut (for decoration)

### **Method**

1. Place the caster sugar and water in a saucepan and bring to boil without stirring. At the same time as putting this on, start to gently beat 80g of egg whites to soft peaks using a mixer.
2. When the temperature of the syrup reaches 105°C increase the speed of the mixer. Once the syrup hits 115°C remove the saucepan from the heat and pour in a thin stream into the beaten egg whites. Continue beating the meringue for 10 minutes so that it cools.
3. Reserve a small bowl of the meringue. Use this to cover the cupcakes and sprinkle with coconut.
4. Once you are sure the meringue is cool start adding small lumps of the butter, mixing each bit thoroughly before adding another piece. Once it is all added increase the speed and mix for about half a minute until the buttercream has a smooth, light but firm consistency.
4. Add the cocoa powder and mix again on high for another half a minute or so.
5. Pipe on top of the cupcakes in your best approximation of a Christmas tree.

### **Decoration**

200g white chocolate  
Dust green food colouring

1. Melt chocolate and add the dust food colouring to achieve the desired colour.
2. Dip the Christmas tree shapes into the chocolate and use a cocktail stick to cover the parts that get miss.
3. Allow to set and decorate with royal icing, sprinkles, sanding sugar and anything else you wish to use. Add a star on the top.