

Basic Vanilla Cupcakes

Follow these 10 simple steps for success every time.

MAKES 12

½ cup butter, softened,
or soft margarine

generous ½ cup superfine
sugar

2 eggs, lightly beaten

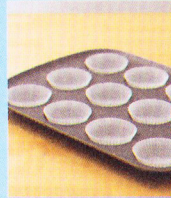
1 tsp vanilla extract

scant 1 cup self-rising flour

1 tbsp milk

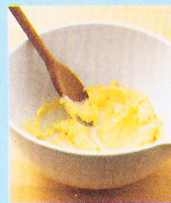
Step 1

Preheat the oven to 350°F/ 180°C. Put 12 paper liners in a shallow muffin pan.



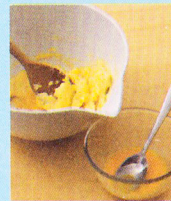
Step 2

Put the butter and sugar into a large bowl. Using a wooden spoon or an electric mixer, beat together until the batter is pale, light, and fluffy.



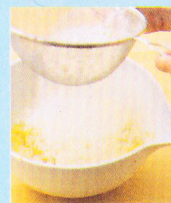
Step 3

Gradually beat in the eggs. Add about 1 tablespoonful at a time and beat thoroughly after each addition.



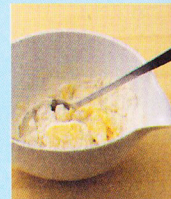
Step 4

Beat in the vanilla extract. Using a large metal strainer or a sifter, sift the flour into the bowl.



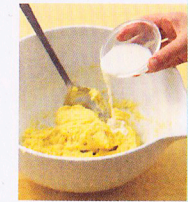
Step 5

Using a metal spoon, gently fold the flour into the batter until thoroughly incorporated.



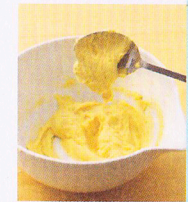
Step 6

Add the milk and fold gently into the batter.



Step 7

The cupcake batter should have a smooth consistency and drop easily from the spoon if tapped on the side of the bowl.



Step 8

Carefully spoon the batter into the paper liners, being careful not to overfill them.



Step 9

Bake in the preheated oven for 15–20 minutes, or until the cupcakes are risen, golden, and just firm to the touch.



Step 10

Let the cupcakes cool in the pan for about 10 minutes, then carefully transfer to a wire rack. Let cool completely.



Flavor variations

Lemon or orange—add the finely grated rind of 1 small lemon or orange to the butter and sugar in step 2.

Chocolate—replace 2 tablespoons of the self-rising flour with unsweetened cocoa.

Coffee—replace the milk with 1 tablespoon of cold strong black coffee.

Almond—replace the vanilla extract with 1 teaspoon of almond extract.

Peppermint—replace the vanilla extract with 1 teaspoon of peppermint extract.