**Chocolate Carrot Cupcakes**

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Cake bit

175g soft brown sugar

3 eggs, lightly beaten

175g sunflower or vegetable oil

125g self raising flour

50g cocoa

½ tsp baking powder

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp vanilla extract or bean paste

Grating of nutmeg

175g grated carrot

Finely grated zest of ½ orange

Icing bit

265g icing sugar

35g cocoa

150g soft butter

100g cream cheese (full fat)

1 tsp vanilla extract or bean paste

50-100g marzipan or sugar paste to make the carrots

Orange food colour gel

Parsley sprigs or green lace jelly sweets to make the carrot tops

Makes 12

Preheat oven to 170°C 150°C Fan GM3

Line a muffin tray with baking cases

Cake bit

1. Place soft brown sugar, oil, eggs and vanilla together in a bowl and whisk to combine.

2. Sieve in baking powder, cinnamon, cocoa and flour. Add the zest, nutmeg and grated carrot. Fold through, quickly and firmly until mixed. It’s important not to overmix as the texture will become dense.

3. Divide between cases and bake for 20-25 until firm to the touch and a skewer comes out clear when inserted in the centre. Allow to cool for 5 minutes in the muffin tray then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.

Carrots

4. Colour the marzipan or icing with a little orange/peach colour food gel. Roll a little in to a ball then a cone shape. Make a hole in the large end to thread the green top in to. Use a knife to make marks around to make it look more carrot like. Repeat.

Icing bit

5. Beat the butter until really soft. Sieve in the icing sugar and add the vanilla and slowly beat to combine. Sieve in the cocoa and add the cream cheese. Beat until creamy and smooth.

6. Once the cakes are cool scoop out some of the middle (set this aside). Use a small spatula or knife to spread icing across the top of each cake. The great thing about this cake is that it doesn’t have to be perfectly iced, in fact it looks better not! Add some to the hole in the middle too and then place a carrot in so some is still sticking proud (you may need to cut some off the bottom and eat that to make it fit properly!)

7. Take the reserved cake ‘holes’ and either crumble with your fingers or blitz in a processor. This will be the ‘dirt’ and can be sprinkled on the icing. Add your carrot top green sprigs and you’re done.