

BEETROOT AND CHOCOLATE MINI CAKES

Season: Year round
From the garden: Beetroot
Type: Dessert
Difficulty: Medium
Serves: 12 regular sized muffins or 24-30 mini muffins (or one full-sized cake!)
Source: Sarah James, Owairaka District School

Equipment

- Chef's knife
- Chopping board
- Small saucepan
- Hand beater
- Large and medium mixing bowls
- Muffin tins
(12 regular or 24-30 mini holes required)
- Box/vegetable grater
- Sieve or sifter
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large spoon
- Whisk
- Cake rack

Ingredients

- 1 medium or two small beetroot, unpeeled but trimmed of the greens
- ½ teaspoon vegetable oil
- 90g (1/3 cup plus 1 Tbsp) unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing the pans
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg (size 8 or use 2 small eggs)
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1/3 cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup buttermilk
(or 1/3 cup milk mixed with 1 Tbsp yogurt)

or ½ cup milk + ½ Tbsp lemon juice

How to make it

1. Wash beetroot and allow to dry on clean tea towel. Trim greens but don't peel. Save any tender leaves for salad, discard trimmings into scrap bucket for the compost bin.
2. If boiling place beetroot into saucepan and cover with cold water, bring to boil and cook small beetroot for about ½ hour or for larger beetroot up to 1½ hours. Alternatively wrap beetroot in lightly oiled tinfoil and bake at 180°C using the same timings as for boiled beetroot. Beetroot is ready when a knife or skewer will slip through without resistance. Allow to cool completely before carefully peeling. This step will need to be done ahead of time. See notes section for tips and hints on how to manage cooking beetroot ahead of time.
3. Preheat oven to 180°C.
4. Use a small amount of butter or oil to grease muffin tins and set aside while you make the batter.
5. In medium sized bowl combine flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Use a whisk to combine and set aside till later.

- Using a box/vegetable grater, grate the beetroot and measure out 1½ cups of grated beetroot. Save any leftover beetroot for another recipe (see notes).
- Place softened butter, brown and white sugar in large mixing bowl and beat using a hand mixer or whisk till pale and fluffy.
- Break egg(s) into cup and discard shell into scrap bucket for the compost bin. Carefully add to the creamed butter and sugar and beat again till egg is combined.
- Scrape down butter mixture with a spatula then add grated beetroot and beat in till well combined.
- Add ½ the dry ingredients to the butter/egg/beetroot mixture and slowly add the buttermilk (or milk/yoghurt mixture), beating with the hand mixer. Once just incorporated add the remaining dry ingredients and fold through gently with a spoon or spatula. Over mixing can make your cakes tough.
- Divide into greased muffin tins and bake for about 12 minutes for mini cakes, 20 minutes for larger muffins and 30 minutes for a cake. Cakes are ready when they spring back if lightly touched or an inserted skewer comes out clean.
- Remove from oven **Caution- hot! Ask an adult to help you with this.** Allow to cool for 10 minutes before removing from tin and allow to cool further on a cake rack.
- Place on serving platter and enjoy as they are or with whipped cream or yoghurt.

Notes:

- Beetroot can be cooked ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator overnight or alternatively placed in airtight zip lock bags and frozen for up to 3 months.
- When cooking beetroot don't peel it unless you want the colour to run e.g. for soup.
- Buttermilk is traditionally a byproduct of butter-making – the liquid that is left over after butter is churned from cream. It is now made commercially by adding a bacterial culture to skimmed milk. It has a slightly sour, acidic taste and is used for making scones, breads and cakes. It will give your baking a good rise and result in a lovely tender product. To make your own 'cheats' buttermilk add 1 tablespoon yoghurt to 1/3 cup milk or 1 tablespoon vinegar to 1 cup of milk.

Skills:

- Boiling, chopping, beating, grating, mixing, creaming, **folding***

* Folding: to mix with a gentle lifting motion, rather than stirring to keep air in the mixture and make it light