



Vanilla Yogurt Cupcakes + Rainbow Glazed Coconut Sprinkles

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 40 / Cook Time 30 / Serves 4 - 6

Shopping List

- FRESH OR FROZEN
- Food coloring options:
 - red or pink: raspberries, pure pomegranate juice, or roasted beets
 - yellow: raw carrot or mango
 - green: frozen spinach
 - blue or purple: red cabbage
 - indigo: mix of blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries
- DAIRY AND EGGS
 - 1 C plain yogurt ****(see allergy subs below)****
 - 2 extra-large eggs ****(see allergy subs below)****
 - 1/2 C unsalted butter, melted ****(see allergy subs below)****
 - 1/3 C milk ****(see allergy subs below)****
- PANTRY
 - pumpkin purée (for orange food coloring)
 - 1 to 3 T or more shredded coconut (1 T for each color used)
 - 1 1/2 C all-purpose flour ****(see allergy subs below)****
 - 1/2 tsp baking powder
 - 1/4 to 1/2 tsp baking soda

- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 C granulated sugar
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract **** (see allergy subs below)****
- 4 T powdered sugar

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

bake: to cook food with dry heat, as in an oven.

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

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

wet vs dry: to mix wet and dry ingredients separately before combining them: dry ingredients are flours, leavening agents, salt, and spices; wet ingredients are those that dissolve or can be dissolved (sugar, eggs, butter, oils, honey, vanilla, milk, and juices).

whisk: to beat or stir ingredients vigorously with a fork or whisk to mix, blend, or incorporate air.

blend: to stir together two or more ingredients until just combined; blending is a gentler process than mixing.

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

drizzle: to trickle a thin stream of a liquid ingredient, like icing or sauce, over food.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

reduce: to boil or simmer a cooking liquid, like a sauce or juice, until it evaporates, thickens, and becomes concentrated, intensifying the flavors.

sprinkle: to scatter small drops or particles of an ingredient evenly or randomly over food.

strain: to separate liquids from solid foods or remove bigger food particles from smaller particles using a perforated or porous device like a strainer, sieve, colander, or cheesecloth.

Equipment

- Oven
- Muffin pan
- Paper cupcake liners
- Mixing bowls
- Measuring cups

- Measuring spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Toothpicks or knife to test doneness
- Blender or food processor
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Fine strainer or cheesecloth
- Medium saucepan
- Small bowls

Ingredients

Vanilla Yogurt Cupcakes

- 1 1/2 C all-purpose flour ****(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour)****
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 C granulated sugar
- 1 C plain yogurt ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt)****
- 2 extra-large eggs ****(for EGG ALLERGY sub 2 mashed ripe bananas + 1 tsp baking powder)****
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract ****(for GLUTEN ALLERGY use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor—check label)****
- 1/2 C unsalted butter, melted ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance)****
- 1/4 C milk ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free milk)****

Rainbow Glazed Coconut Sprinkles

- 1 to 3 T shredded coconut (1 T for each color used)
- 4 T powdered sugar
- 1/2 T milk ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free milk)****
- Food coloring:

- red or pink: use raspberries, pure pomegranate juice, or roasted beets
- orange: use pumpkin purée
- yellow: use raw carrot or mango
- green: use frozen spinach
- blue: use red cabbage + about 1/4 tsp baking soda to turn it blue—lightly sprinkle and stir until you get the desired shade
- indigo: use a mix of blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries until the shade is perfect
- purple: use red cabbage

Food Allergen Substitutions

Vanilla Yogurt Cupcakes

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour. Use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor.

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt. Substitute dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance. Substitute dairy-free/nut-free milk.

Egg: For 2 extra-large eggs, substitute 2 mashed ripe bananas + 1 tsp baking powder.

Rainbow Glazed Coconut Sprinkles

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free milk.

Instructions

Vanilla Yogurt Cupcakes

preheat + measure + mix

Preheat your oven to 350 F and line a muffin pan with paper liners. Measure and mix together **1 1/2 cups flour, 1/2 teaspoon baking powder, 1/4 teaspoon baking soda,** and **1/4 teaspoon salt** in a medium bowl.

crack + stir

Crack **2 large eggs** into a large bowl and stir in **1 cup plain yogurt, 1 cup sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla**

extract, 1/4 cup milk, and 1/2 cup melted butter.

combine + whisk + pour

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and whisk together until smooth. Pour the batter into the wells of your lined muffin pan.

bake + decorate

Bake in your preheated oven for 16 to 18 minutes or until cooked through when tested with a toothpick or knife. Add frosting or other toppings if desired, like **Rainbow Glazed Coconut Sprinkles!**

Rainbow Glazed Coconut Sprinkles

food coloring

Create your colored liquid for your sprinkles first using one of the three following methods.

fruit method

Using either **berries** (red or indigo) or **mango** (yellow), start with a cup of fresh or frozen fruit. Use a blender to liquify and then pour the thick liquid over a fine strainer to remove any seeds. You should have about 1/2 cup of juice.

root veggie method

Using either **roasted beets** (red), **raw carrots** (yellow), or **spinach** (green), add small amounts of water, bit by bit, until you have enough to totally blend and liquify the vegetables. Then use a fine metal strainer or cheesecloth to remove the pulp. You should have about 1/2 cup of juice.

cabbage method

Chop up a small head of **red cabbage** (purple or blue), add it to a medium-size saucepan on your stovetop, and cover with water. Bring to a boil and simmer for up to 25 minutes, until the water turns deep purple. Remove the cabbage and set it aside. Strain the liquid and add **1/4 teaspoon baking soda** to it to turn it from purple to blue!

reduce

Once you have your colored liquids, you'll need to reduce them to make a more powerful coloring agent. Pour each juice, one at a time, into a small saucepan and cook over medium heat until it reduces to a thick, very colorful paste.

add + mix

Add **1 tablespoon of dried shredded coconut** to small bowls, one for each color, and add your homemade natural food coloring a few drops at a time. Mix thoroughly until the coconut is completely and evenly coated with the color.

spread + dry

Heat a skillet on your stovetop over very low heat and spread the colored coconut shreds on the skillet to dry the color onto the coconut. Try not to mix the colors when still wet. Cook for about 5 to 8 minutes, watching closely so the coconut doesn't burn! Remove from heat and if you like, mix colors together for a rainbow effect.

whisk + drizzle + sprinkle

Make a sugar glaze. Measure **1/4 cup powdered sugar** and **1/2 tablespoon milk** into a small bowl and whisk until smooth. Finally, drizzle or spread a small amount of glaze over cooled cupcakes, like **Vanilla Yogurt Cupcakes**, or cookies, like Perky Peppermint Chocolate Shortbread Cookies. Then, sprinkle the rainbow sprinkles on top of each. The sprinkles will stick to the glaze like glue!

Featured Ingredient: Vanilla!

Hi! I'm Vanilla!

"I'm a flower, a flavor, an aroma, a spice, a seed, and a pod! Did you know that my pods come from a Vanilla orchid? For cooking, I can flavor foods by adding vanilla extract (much tastier than imitation vanilla) or vanilla paste (made from extract and ground seeds). You can also slice open a pod and scrape out the tiny black seeds to add to your dish, and steep the pod in liquid. I'm essential for baking (and ice cream)!"

History & Etymology

Vanilla has an intriguing history. Because of its high value over time, vanilla has been the subject of historical robbery and great intrigue. Growers in Madagascar are known to "tattoo" their beans with a knife when the pods are still green so they can identify their beans if they suspect someone has stolen them.

How they find the stolen beans is anyone's guess!

Vanilla is indigenous to southeastern Mexico and, in the 1500s, traveled to Spain. Initially, it was only valued for its use as perfume.

For hundreds of years, Mexico was the only country that grew vanilla. Now, Madagascar, an island country off the coast of Southeastern Africa, grows the most vanilla in the world.

Other places that produce vanilla are Costa Rica, Guatemala, Uganda, Kenya, China, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Fiji, Tahiti, Hawaii, and other Pacific Islands. Find these places on your map! What do they all have in common? They are hot, tropical places where vanilla orchids can grow abundantly.

Why is vanilla so expensive even today? It's because growing vanilla is very labor-intensive. In fact, vanilla is the second most labor-intensive agricultural crop, next to saffron. It can take nearly three years after planting the vines before the first orchid flowers appear. Vanilla beans must remain on the vine for nine months before developing their sweet aroma. The beans are still green when growers harvest them. Then they turn brown and become richly flavored during the drying and curing process.

We consume the most vanilla in the United States compared to any other place! However, the vanilla found

in fragrances and foods is 98 percent imitation! This is because synthetic vanilla is less expensive than the real thing.

Only the *Melipona* bee in Central America can pollinate the vanilla flower. In other parts of the world, farmers mimic the process with wooden needles.

July 23rd is National Vanilla Ice Cream Day in the US.

The English word "vanilla" comes from the Spanish word "vainilla," meaning "little pod, the diminutive of "vaina," meaning "sheath" or "pod."

Anatomy

Vanilla is a member of the orchid family and prefers hot, wet, tropical climates. Vanilla is also the only edible orchid (that we know of).

A climbing vine, vanilla grows whitish-green flowers that are hand pollinated. It requires supportive structures for optimal growth. Vanilla vines can grow anywhere from 30 to 50 feet long!

The fruit, when mature, is about five inches long, a half-inch thick, and looks like a bean pod.

The pod ripens gradually for 8 to 9 months after flowering, eventually turning black and giving off a strong aroma. Inside the cured vanilla bean pod are thousands of tiny vanilla seeds that are rich in flavor.

These seeds give vanilla bean ice cream its tiny black flecks, and it is how you know your vanilla ice cream is the real thing!

The vanilla orchid lasts only a day, and pollination needs to happen before it dies.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

No two vanilla beans are the same in taste, color, or aroma, just like wine grapes.

Store vanilla beans away from heat or light.

To open a vanilla pod, place it on a flat surface. Press down at the top to hold it steady, then take a knife and split the pod down the middle. Next, spread apart the pod and run your knife down its length. The seeds will stick to the knife!

Use the empty vanilla pod to infuse a jar of sugar or salt. Or steep it in milk or cream to use in recipes! Or poach fruit with a vanilla bean to give it a subtle kiss of flavor.

A few drops of vanilla will balance a tomato's acidity.

Steep vanilla beans in coffee or tea, or grind them with your coffee beans for flavored java.

Spiders don't like vanilla! So, vanilla and vinegar in a spray bottle will send spiders running!

Try chopping up vanilla beans and mixing them with Epsom salts and a little vanilla extract for a luxurious bath.

One vanilla bean is equivalent to about three teaspoons of vanilla extract.

You can add vanilla to sweet and savory recipes. Try mixing some vanilla beans into a homemade salad vinaigrette or poaching a vanilla bean in butter for a delicious sauce to serve over fish!

Vanilla extract is made by pounding vanilla pods in a solution of ethanol and water. Ethanol is a grain

alcohol found in alcoholic beverages, but it is also used as a fuel additive, often blended with gasoline (especially corn-based ethanol). However, the ethanol manufactured for drinks and vanilla extract has to follow more purity standards than the type used in petroleum products.

Nutrition

There are some claims of the health benefits of vanilla, such as reducing skin damage, aiding digestion, and alleviating nausea; however, there is not enough evidence to confirm these. Still, vanilla's pleasant fragrance may help calm and lift moods.