



Valentine's Day Mini Mahogany Cakes with Cheery Cherry Chocolate Drizzle

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 25 / **Cook Time** 25 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

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

sift: to pass a dry ingredient like flour or sugar through a sieve to make it lighter and more even 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).

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

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

Equipment

- ☐ Oven
- ☐ Muffin pan
- ☐ Paper cupcake liners (optional)
- ☐ Medium mixing bowl
- ☐ Large mixing bowl
- ☐ Dry measuring cups
- ☐ Measuring spoons
- ☐ Liquid measuring cup

- ☐ Whisk
- ☐ Blender (or pitcher + immersion blender)

Ingredients

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- ☐ 1 1/2 C all-purpose flour ****(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour)****
- ☐ 1/3 C cocoa powder ****(for CHOCOLATE ALLERGY sub carob powder)****
- ☐ 1/2 tsp salt
- ☐ 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- ☐ 1/2 tsp baking powder
- ☐ 1/2 C brown or granulated sugar
- ☐ 1 tsp pure vanilla extract ****(for GLUTEN ALLERGY use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor—check label)****
- ☐ 1 C milk ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free milk)****
- ☐ 1 tsp vinegar
- ☐ 1 C cinnamon applesauce (or plain, unsweetened applesauce)
- ☐ 1/2 C or 1 stick very soft butter ****(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance, or nut-free oil, like vegetable or olive oil)****
- ☐ 1 big handful chocolate chips, optional ****(Omit for CHOCOLATE ALLERGY or sub carob chips and for DAIRY/NUT/SOY ALLERGY use Enjoy Life brand chocolate chips)****
- ☐ Drizzle:
 - ☐ 1/2 C frozen and thawed cherries (frozen cherries are already pitted)
 - ☐ 1 tsp cocoa powder ****(for CHOCOLATE ALLERGY sub carob powder)****
 - ☐ 1 T granulated or brown sugar
 - ☐ 1 T cinnamon applesauce (or plain, unsweetened applesauce)

Food Allergen Substitutions

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

Chocolate: Substitute carob powder for cocoa powder. Omit chocolate chips or sub carob chips.

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free milk. Substitute dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance, or a nut-free oil, like vegetable or olive oil. Omit chocolate chips or use Enjoy Life brand chocolate chips.

Nut/Soy: Omit optional chocolate chips or use Enjoy Life brand chocolate chips.

Instructions

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preheat + measure + sift

Preheat your oven to 350 F. Into a medium mixing bowl, measure the dry ingredients: **1 1/2 cups flour**, **1/3 cup cocoa powder**, **1/2 teaspoon salt**, **1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda**, and **1/2 teaspoon baking powder**. Sift the ingredients by stirring with a whisk to work out any lumps and mix everything together.

scrumptious science

Both baking soda and baking powder are leavening agents, which means they are added to baked goods before cooking to help them rise. They both do this by producing carbon dioxide, but they're not the same. The two substances are used under different conditions and can provide very different results. Baking soda is pure sodium bicarbonate. It is approximately four times stronger than baking powder and is used in recipes that contain acidic ingredients. Baking powder, on the other hand, contains baking soda, but it also includes an acidifying agent, like cream of tartar, so that it can work on its own.

measure + whisk

In a large mixing bowl, measure and whisk together the wet ingredients: **1/2 cup sugar**, **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**, **1 cup milk**, **1 teaspoon vinegar**, **1 cup applesauce**, and **1/2 cup butter**.

combine + stir + fold

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, a little at a time, and stir gently until all traces of flour disappear. Don't overmix! Lastly, fold in **1 big handful of chocolate chips** if using.

grease + bake + drizzle

Grease a muffin pan (or use paper cupcake liners) and fill each muffin well halfway with batter. Bake until cooked through, about 20 to 25 minutes. Let the cakes cool slightly while you make the Cheery Cherry Chocolate Drizzle!

measure + combine

Measure and combine **1/2 cup cherries** (be careful—cherry juice stains!), **1 teaspoon cocoa powder**, **1 tablespoon sugar**, and 1 tablespoon applesauce to a blender.

blend + drizzle

Blend until the mixture is smooth and pourable! Drizzle liberally over the baked and cooled Mini Mahogany Cakes!

Featured Ingredient: Cherry!

Hi! I'm Cherry!

"My name is a tree, a fruit, a wood, a color, and a female name! My skin is often a rich, dark red color, and when you bite into me, my flesh is the same color! You can eat around the pit in my center and spit it out (or remove it with your fingers). If you want to remove the pit first, pull out my stem and insert the narrow end of a chopstick (or similar tool) into the hole left by the stem. Then push the pit out through the other end, or use a cherry pitter if you have one!"

History & Etymology

The cherry is a stone fruit or drupe. People have been eating cherries for thousands of years.

Archaeological evidence of wild (sweet) cherries has been found in Europe from the Early Bronze Age, about 2077 BCE. They were probably being domesticated and grown by 800 BCE.

Turkey produces the most sweet variety of cherries, followed by the United States. Russia is the largest producer of sour cherries. Washington, California, and Oregon grow the most sweet cherries in the US, and Michigan grows the most sour cherries.

The Rainier cherry was named for Mount Rainier in Washington State and was developed in 1952 at Washington State University by crossing a Bing cherry with a Van cherry.

Maraschino cherries are sweetened, preserved sour cherries originally made with Marasca cherries from the Dalmatia region on the Croatian coast. They were preserved with Maraschino liqueur made from cherries and their pits, stems, and leaves. However, the maraschino cherries we use now are made with Queen (Royal) Anne cherries soaked in a sweetened, non-alcoholic syrup with artificial red food coloring added and are really imitation maraschino cherries.

Ornamental cherry trees are grown for their beauty when they flower. They grow naturally in Japan and other countries. Large displays of cherry tree blossoms attract tourists in springtime to places in Japan, the US (especially Washington DC), and other countries.

Cherry trees produce a reddish-brown hardwood used to make furniture, cabinets, and musical instruments. You can also smoke meat using cherry wood chips.

The world record for cherry-pit spitting is over 93 feet! Brian Krause, part of the Krause family cherry-pit spitting dynasty, set the record at an annual contest in Eau Claire, Michigan, in 2004.

The cherry is the state fruit of Utah.

The English word "cherry" comes from the Old Northern French "cherise," from the Latin "cerasum," based on the Greek "kerasos."

Anatomy

The average life for a cherry tree is 15 to 30 years, although black cherry trees can live up to 250 years. However, the oldest cherry blossom tree in Japan, the "Jindai Zakura," is about 2,000 years old!

Cherry fruit grows on a flowering tree from the *Prunus* genus, which belongs to the Rosaceae (rose) family. The two main species used commercially are the sweet cherry (*Prunus avium*) and the sour cherry (*Prunus cerasus*). There are over 1,000 varieties; however, we will highlight only four common ones:

Bings are sweet red cherries and dark red when ripe. They taste sweet with just a bit of tartness and are suitable for snacking, salads, ice cream, or baked goods.

Rainiers are sweet cherries that are yellow and reddish-pink. They are good in salads and for snacking.

Queen (Royal) Anne cherries are sweet and look like Rainiers but are more tart. They are often covered in chocolate for candies, used in baking, and to make modern maraschino cherries.

Montmorency cherries are sour cherries primarily grown in the state of Michigan. They are light red, tart, and can be used year-round because they are often canned, dried, or frozen. They are used in pies, cobblers, and, if dried, in trail mix or salads.

Fruit from the Black cherry tree (*Prunus serotina*) can be eaten raw, and the cherries are also added to baked goods, jelly, wine, and yogurt. They are sweet cherries and are dark red to almost black when ripe. In addition, black cherry wood is used in cabinet and furniture-making.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

When picking cherries, make sure they are firm, plump, and shiny, with attached green stems. There should be no bruises, cracks, holes, or wrinkles. Bing cherries should be dark red and Rainier cherries bright yellow and red.

Store unwashed cherries immediately in a plastic bag in the refrigerator with their stems attached. Try to eat or cook them within seven days. Rinse in a colander before using, and then pat them dry with a kitchen or paper towel.

Cherry cake, pie, cobblers, crisps, and tarts are popular desserts. Cherries are also made into jelly or preserves, ice cream, milkshakes, syrups, and sauces to accompany grilled or roasted meat. Raw cherries are great for a snack, but they can also be sliced or chopped to add to salads.

Maraschino cherries are sour cherries soaked in sweet syrup. They are used to garnish ice cream, gelatin desserts, pudding, milkshakes, cocktails, and soft drinks (especially cherry sodas).

It takes about 80 cherries to make a homemade cherry pie!

Nutrition

Cherries have a moderate amount of vitamin C and fiber, and sour cherries have about 50 percent more vitamin C than sweet cherries.

Some studies indicate that cherries, which have antioxidants, help repair damage to the cells of our bodies and aid our muscles in their recovery after a strenuous workout. They also may help prevent gout or ease

its pain and can be used as a sleep aid.

Some of these purported health benefits require eating a lot of cherries, so it may be beneficial to drink a concentrated cherry juice instead.

As their names imply, sweet cherries contain more sugar than the sour varieties, but you would not want to eat the sour type raw.

A cherry pit is inedible, and the kernel inside it is toxic if ingested in large amounts.