Simply Carrot Cake Cupcakes

Ingredients

- 1 and 1/3 cups (166g) **plain flour**
- 1 teaspoon **baking powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon **baking soda**
- 1/2 teaspoon **salt**
- 1 teaspoon **ground cinnamon**
- 3/4 teaspoon **ground ginger**
- 1/4 teaspoon **ground nutmeg**
- 1/2 cup (120ml) **vegetable oil**
- 1 cup (200g) packed dark **brown sugar**
- 2 large **eggs**, at room temperature
- 1/3 cup (80g) **unsweetened applesauce, sour cream**, or **plain yogurt**, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon **pure vanilla extract**
- 1 and 1/2 cups (200g) peeled, shredded, and coarsely chopped **carrots*** (about 3 large carrots)
- **optional add-in:** 3/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans; raisins

CREAM CHEESE ICING

- 225g (one block) full-fat block **cream cheese**, softened to room temperature
- 1/2 cup (115g) **unsalted butter**, softened to room temperature
- 3 cups (360g) **icing sugar**
- 1 teaspoon **pure vanilla extract**
- 1/8 teaspoon **salt**
- **optional garnish:** white chocolate carrot topper and/or finely chopped walnuts or pecans

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with cupcake liners.

2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg together in a large bowl. Set aside. Whisk the oil, brown sugar, eggs, applesauce, and vanilla extract together until combined, and then whisk in the carrots. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and fold or whisk together until completely combined. Batter will be slightly thick.

3. Pour/spoon the batter into the liners, filling only about 3/4 full to avoid spilling over the sides. Bake for 21–23 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. For around **30 mini cupcakes,** bake for about 12–13 minutes, same oven temperature. Allow the cupcakes to cool completely before frosting.

4. **Meanwhile, make the icing:** In a large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a paddle or whisk attachment, beat the cream cheese and butter together on high speed until smooth and creamy. Add icing sugar, vanilla extract, and salt. Beat on low speed for 30 seconds and then switch to high speed and beat for 2 minutes. Cover and refrigerate the frosting as the cupcakes finish cooling—this is helpful if you plan to pipe the frosting with a piping bag + tip. Cold cream cheese frosting holds its shape better.

How to Make White Chocolate Carrots Garnish: In a microwave-safe bowl, melt 110g of white chocolate in 20-second increments, stirring after each until perfectly smooth. Separate into two bowls (don't worry about making them perfectly equal). Tint one bowl with orange (1 drop of red and 3 drops of yellow) food coloring, and the other with green food coloring. Pour into two squeeze bottles. On a baking sheet lined with baking paper, drizzle the orange melted chocolate into a carrot shape, then drizzle the green melted chocolate onto the tops to make the carrot stems. Refrigerate the pan until the chocolate carrots are set, at least 15 minutes. The white chocolate carrots do soften up when they come back to room temperature, so if making these cupcakes in advance, make sure to keep them in the refrigerator until it's nearly time to serve them.