

Fairy cakes



TIP: You can use just icing sugar if you do not like ricotta cheese

Fairy cakes are easy to prepare and always popular with children. Using ricotta in the topping makes a lighter, fresher alternative to the more usual glacé icing. The cakes are best iced shortly before serving.

- 125g unsalted butter
- 125g caster sugar
- 2 eggs
- 100g self-raising white flour
- 30g self-raising wholemeal flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- Finely grated zest of ½ orange
- 30g ready-to-eat dried apricots, thinly sliced, to decorate

Orange ricotta icing

- 250 g (8½ oz) ricotta cheese
- 55g icing sugar
- Finely grated zest of ½ orange

Preparation method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F, gas mark 4). Line a 12-cup and a 6-cup patty tin or shallow bun tin with paper cake cases.
2. Put the butter, sugar and eggs in a large bowl. Sift the white and wholemeal flours and the baking powder into the bowl, tipping in any bran left in the sieve. Add the orange zest and beat with a hand-held electric mixer for 2 minutes or until smooth and creamy.
3. Divide the mixture among the paper cake cases. Bake for about 20 minutes or until just firm to the touch. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. (The un-iced cakes can be stored in an airtight container for up to 2 days.)
4. To make the icing, put the ricotta in a bowl and sift in the icing sugar. Add the orange zest and beat with a wooden spoon until well mixed.
5. Spread a little icing over the top of each cake and decorate with a couple of dried apricot slices. Serve as soon as possible after icing.