

# Groundhog Cupcakes

This cupcake is almost too cute to eat. Buried in loads of creamy chocolate frosting that's covered in chocolate sprinkles, and complete with a little frosting head with eyes and a nose, these groundhog cupcakes would make any winter party a lot of fun. Serve them on Groundhog Day in February or turn this cupcake into another animal for a different occasion!

- Makes 22 to 24 cupcakes
- Preparation time: 15 minutes
- Baking time: 18 to 20 minutes
- Assembly time: 45 minutes

## What You Need:

- 1 package (18.25 ounces) plain German chocolate cake mix
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cupcake pans
- 24 paper liners for cupcake pans
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter, at room temperature
- 4 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 to 4 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 4 containers (1.75 ounces each, 1 cup total) chocolate sprinkles
- 3 tablespoons butter at room temperature
- 2 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 to 4 teaspoons milk
- 48 miniature chocolate chips
- 24 brown M&M's
- Sliced almonds
- Pastry bag (or sandwich bag)

## What You Do:

1. Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Ask your child to fill both cupcake pans with paper liners. For extra math practice, she can even make patterns in the pans with different colored liners!
3. Have your child pour the cake mix, buttermilk, oil, and vanilla in a large mixing bowl. You can crack the eggs and put them in too.
4. Blend with an electric mixer on low speed for 30 seconds. Stop the machine and scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula. Increase the mixer speed to medium and beat 2 minutes more, scraping down the sides again if needed.
5. With your child, spoon or scoop 1/3 cup batter into each lined cupcake cup. Remind your child to fill each cup three quarters of the way full, because the cupcakes will rise in the oven!
6. Place the pans in the oven and bake them until they spring back when lightly pressed with your finger (18 to 20 minutes).



7. Remove the pans from the oven and place them on wire racks to cool for 5 minutes. Run a dinner knife around the edges of the cupcake liners, lift the cupcakes up from the bottoms of the cups using the end of the knife, and pick them out of the cups carefully with your fingertips. Place them on a wire rack to cool for 15 minutes before frosting.

**While the cupcakes are baking, keep your child busy with the frosting! You will be making two different kinds. Start with the pale chocolate:**

8. Place the butter in a large mixing bowl. Blend with an electric mixer on low speed for about 30 seconds until the butter is fluffy.
9. Stop the machine and ask your child to add the confectioners' sugar, cocoa powder, 3 tablespoons milk, and vanilla. Blend with the mixer on low speed for about 1 minute until the sugar is incorporated. Increase the speed to medium and beat for another minute until the frosting is light and fluffy. If the frosting seems too stiff, blend in up to 1 tablespoon of extra milk.
10. While you're working the electric mixer, ask your child to pour all of the chocolate sprinkles into a small bowl.

**Now, it's time to make the groundhog face!**

11. Place the butter in a large mixing bowl. Blend with an electric mixer on low speed for 30 seconds until the butter is nice and fluffy.
12. Stop the machine ask your child to add the confectioners' sugar, cocoa powder, and 3 teaspoons milk.
13. Blend with the mixer on low speed for 1 minute until the sugar is incorporated. Increase the speed to medium and beat for another minute until it's about the consistency of peanut butter. If the frosting is too stiff, add another teaspoon of milk.

**Set it aside and get ready to decorate!**

14. Have your child place a heaping tablespoon of the pale chocolate frosting on each cupcake and spread it so that the cupcake tops are completely covered.
15. Tell her to dip the cupcakes in the bowl of sprinkles right away so the sprinkles will stick all over! If you'd like, you can make a little assembly line so that you frost and she dips.
16. Fill a pastry bag fitted with a #12 tip (5/16 inch wide) with two thirds of the frosting for the head. If you don't have a pastry bag, you can put the frosting in a sandwich bag and cut one of the corners to make a tip.
17. To make the head, point the pastry bag tip toward one edge of the cupcake top and squeeze the frosting from the bag in a small spiral about 1 inch wide and 1/2 inch deep. For the ears, pipe 1 small dot of frosting on each side of the head.
18. After you make each head, pass it on to your child to do the face! Tell her to place an M&M in the center of the spiral for the nose and 2 mini chocolate chips slightly above it for the eyes. Tuck 2 trimmed almond slices below the nose for the groundhog's teeth.
19. Repeat with the remaining cupcakes, adding more frosting to the pastry bag as needed. Place these cupcakes, uncovered or in a cake saver, in the refrigerator until the frosting sets, 20 minutes. The cupcakes are ready to serve!

Store the cupcakes, in a cake saver or under a glass dome, at room temperature for up to 3 days or in

the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

***The Cupcake Doctor says...***

You can easily turn this groundhog into a dog! Use a #21 (star) tip with some of the frosting used for the head to pipe small ears on the sides of the face. With a wave motion, pipe on a tail at the edge opposite the head so that it appears curled. To make a turkey, omit the chocolate sprinkles and make rows of sliced almonds standing on end in the pale chocolate frosting. To make pigs, frost with a pink buttercream frosting, cover in pink sprinkles, then pipe on a head frosting tinted pink with food coloring to make the face, ears, and tail.

*Excerpted from "Cupcakes! from the Cake Doctor" by Anne Byrn. (Workman, New York, Copyright 2005).  
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