

Cleo Coyle's Blue Velvet Cupcakes with Buttercream Frosting

Photos and text © by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) in collaboration with her husband, Marc Cerasini

Like red velvet cake, *blue* velvet carries a wonderful hint of cocoa. This is a beautiful cupcake for birthday parties and baby or wedding showers. Because blue is also the color for Hanukkah, I used this recipe to make a cupcake menorah. This is an easy recipe that uses a cake mix starter, but there are some tricky aspects, which is why I'm passing along my tips, so you can bake with blue velvet joy! ~ [Cleo Coyle](#)

Makes about 16 cupcakes

Ingredients

For the cupcakes

1 box of white or vanilla cake mix (*with pudding in the mix*)
4 teaspoons natural, unsweetened cocoa powder
1/3 cup vegetable oil (*I use canola*)
3 eggs (*lightly beaten with a fork*)
1 cup whole milk + 1/4 cup whole milk (*add separately*)
1 tablespoon white vinegar
1-2 teaspoons Royal Blue food coloring gel or paste
(*also called Icing Color, see my note below*)*

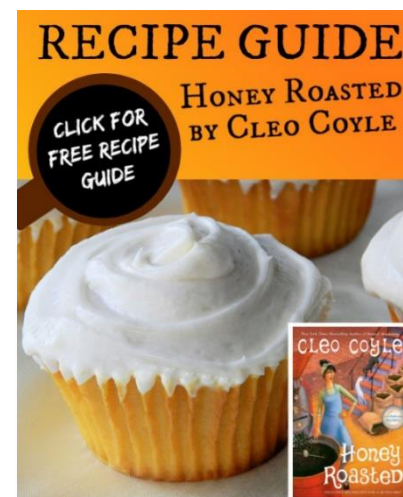
For the buttercream frosting

10 tablespoons butter, softened
3 cups confectioners' sugar (*aka powdered or icing sugar*)
3 tablespoons whole milk (*+ maybe a little extra*)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Royal Blue food coloring gel paste (*also called Icing Color*)*

***Note on the food coloring:** Because of the brown cocoa powder in this recipe, your cupcakes will end up turquoise in color (or even greenish) instead of blue if you use the wrong kind of food coloring or the wrong amount. To get the beautiful shade of blue in my photos, be sure you do two things:

(1) Do not use water-based food coloring such as McCormick's brand. Use a *gel* paste coloring. I used Wilton Royal Blue Icing Color gel paste. Michael's stores carry it in their baking supplies section, but you can also buy it online; [click here](#) to see.

(2) My other piece of advice is to use enough of the food coloring. Don't skimp. Start with one full teaspoon, at least. You may need up to another full teaspoon to see your batter turn the shade of blue that you like best. (Some bakers add a very small amount of violet gel paste to help achieve a deep, royal blue. Give that a try, if you like, but I did achieve a pretty blue color using only blue gel paste.)



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FOR THE CUPCAKES:

Step 1: First preheat your oven to 325° F. Place your 1 tablespoon of vinegar into a measuring cup and fill to the 1 cup line with whole milk. Set aside for five minutes.

Step 2: Into a large mixing bowl, combine the box of cake mix, cocoa powder, vegetable or canola oil, and eggs. Add the sour milk from Step 1 and an additional ¼ cup whole milk. Beat with an electric mixer for about a minute until a smooth batter forms. (Be sure to scrape down the bowl as you mix.)

Step 3: Measure out 1 teaspoon of the royal blue gel paste and add it to the batter. Mix well and observe the color. You may need to add up to 1 more teaspoon of gel paste to achieve the depth of blue you want.

Step 4: Line cupcake tins with paper liners. Take out the ¼ cup container in your measuring set. Use it to measure out the batter for each cupcake. This will keep the size consistent. Bake in your preheated 325° F. oven for 20 to 25 minutes (exact time depends on your oven). Cupcakes are done when the top is set and a toothpick inserted into the center of a test cupcake comes out free of wet batter. Transfer pans to a cooling rack and allow the cupcakes to cool in their pans at least five minutes before removing.



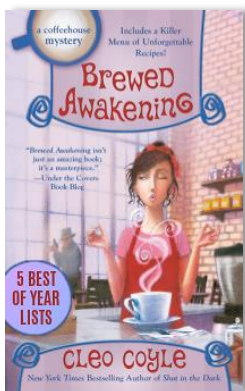
FOR THE BUTTERCREAM ICING:

Notes for success: Canned icing doesn't come close to the wonderful taste of homemade buttercream. It's easy to make. Just be sure to: (1) Start with softened butter. Otherwise, you'll struggle to cream it. (2) When adding milk start with the lowest amount possible and add it in very slowly until you achieve a smooth, spreadable icing. If you throw in a large amount of milk, you will end up with watery frosting—at that point, even if you whip more butter into it, the frosting may remain grainy. (Ask me how I know.)

Step 1: Into a mixing bowl, cut the softened butter into pieces. Measure in the vanilla. Using an electric mixer, cream these ingredients until light and fluffy. Stop the mixer.

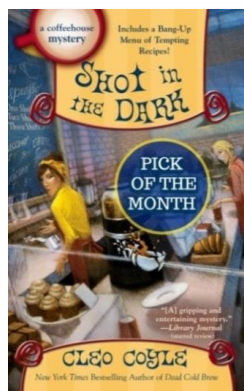
Step 2: Add in the confectioners' sugar and 3 tablespoons of milk. (No more!) Beat until the sugar is completely incorporated. If the frosting is still too thick, add in a very small splash of milk and beat again. Add in more milk this way, a little at a time, until you get a smooth consistency that's easy to spread on your cupcake tops. (Try a test frosting of one cupcake to be sure.)

Step 3: Finally, add a small amount of gel paste coloring to the frosting and beat again. Add more gel paste to achieve the shade of blue that you'd like. I like to use the tines of a fork, dipping it into the bottle of gel to add the smallest amount of frosting before beating again. Then frost your cupcakes and . . . eat with joy!



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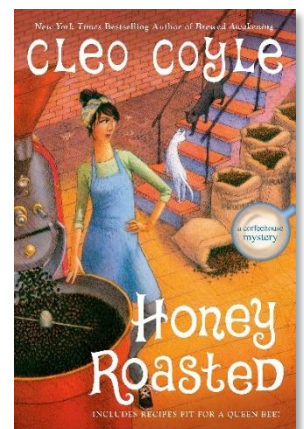
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