

Cookies & Cream Graduation Cupcakes



Graduation is a milestone worth celebrating, and these Star of the Show Graduation Cupcakes are made for the occasion. Rich cookies and cream cupcakes are topped with silky vanilla buttercream, personalized school colors, gold accents, and handcrafted fondant graduation decorations for a dessert that feels both playful and polished.

Whether you are celebrating a kindergarten promotion, high school graduation, college commencement, nursing school completion, or another major achievement, these cupcakes can easily be customized to match the graduate's school colors and party theme.

The contrast of chocolate cookie crumbs, smooth buttercream, metallic sprinkles, and graduation-inspired toppers creates a bakery-style presentation without requiring overly complicated decorating techniques. Display them together as the centerpiece of a graduation dessert table, package them individually as party favors, or gift them directly to the graduate.



Why You'll Love These Graduation Cupcakes

- Easy to customize with school or party colors
- Rich cookies and cream flavor
- Perfect for graduates of any age
- Includes handmade fondant topper instructions
- Ideal for dessert tables, gifts, and party favors
- Can be made with a boxed mix or homemade cupcake batter
- Easy to personalize with Chefmaster Liqua-Gel® Food Colors

Decorating Inspiration

For this design, classic cookies and cream cupcakes are paired with graduation-inspired accents for a clean, celebratory look.

The decorating elements include:

- Cookies and cream cupcakes
- Silky vanilla buttercream
- Buttercream tinted in school colors
- Black fondant graduation caps
- White fondant diplomas
- Gold fondant accents
- Gold pearl sprinkles
- Optional edible gold luster dust

Chefmaster Products Used

Use Chefmaster Liqua-Gel® Food Colors to tint the buttercream and coordinate the cupcakes with the graduate's school, university, or party theme.

Color combinations could include:

- Royal blue and gold
- Red and black
- Purple and white
- Green and gold
- Navy and silver
- Maroon and gold



- Orange and blue

Begin with a small amount of food color and gradually add more until the desired shade is reached.

What You'll Need

- Cupcake pans
- Cupcake liners
- Mixing bowls
- Stand mixer or hand mixer
- Whisk attachment
- Paddle attachment
- Rubber spatula
- Cooling rack
- Large piping bags
- Two different large star piping tips
- One small star piping tip
- Offset spatula or spoon
- Rolling pin
- Pizza cutter or small knife
- Fondant tools
- Edible glue or water
- Black, white, and gold fondant
- Gold pearl sprinkles or decorations of your choice
- Optional edible gold luster dust

Cookies and Cream Cupcakes

For a quicker option, prepare one box of white or vanilla cake mix according to the package instructions and fold crushed chocolate sandwich cookies into the finished batter.

For homemade cupcakes, use the recipe below.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup salted butter, melted (113 grams)
- 1 cup granulated sugar (211 grams)
- 4 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour (130 grams)



- 1/3 cup sour cream, at room temperature (82 grams)
- 1/2 cup buttermilk, at room temperature (120 grams)
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste (13 grams)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup finely crushed chocolate sandwich cookies

If using unsalted butter, add an additional 1/2 teaspoon of salt.

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F and line the cupcake pans with cupcake liners.
2. Sift the flour, granulated sugar, and baking powder into a large mixing bowl. Set aside.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk the buttermilk and sour cream together until smooth.
4. Add the egg whites, melted butter, vegetable oil, and vanilla. Whisk until evenly combined.
5. With the mixer running on low speed, slowly pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients.
6. Stop halfway through mixing to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl.
7. Continue mixing just until the batter is combined. Avoid overmixing. Use a rubber spatula to gently fold the batter and remove any remaining large lumps.
8. Fold the crushed chocolate sandwich cookies into the batter.
9. Fill each cupcake liner approximately three-quarters full.
10. Bake for approximately 16 minutes. Check the cupcakes and add additional baking time as needed.
11. The cupcakes are ready when the centers no longer jiggle and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with a few moist crumbs.
12. Transfer the cupcakes to a cooling rack and allow them to cool completely before decorating.

Silky Vanilla Buttercream

Ingredients

- 3 cups unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 5 cups powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon clear vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons warm water or heavy cream
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice



- Chefmaster Liqua-Gel® Food Colors in your selected school colors

Instructions

1. Add the room-temperature butter to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment.
2. Beat the butter on medium-high speed for 5 to 10 minutes, or until it becomes very light, fluffy, and pale in color.
3. Reduce the mixer speed to low. Gradually add the powdered sugar approximately 1 cup at a time.
4. Mix only until each addition is incorporated. Avoid overmixing during this step.
5. Add the vanilla extract, lemon juice, and salt. Mix briefly to combine.
6. Increase the mixer to medium speed. Slowly drizzle in the warm water or cream while the buttercream continues to whip.
7. For an especially smooth finish, place approximately one-third of the buttercream in a heat-safe bowl. Gently melt it in the microwave using short intervals or over a double boiler.
8. Pour the melted buttercream back into the remaining buttercream and mix until evenly combined.
9. Switch to the paddle attachment and mix on low speed for 10 to 15 minutes. This helps remove excess air bubbles and creates a smooth, silky texture.
10. Divide the buttercream into separate bowls based on the number of colors you plan to use.
11. Add Chefmaster Liqua-Gel® Food Colors a little at a time, mixing thoroughly between additions, until each desired shade is reached.

How to Make Fondant Diploma Toppers

1. Roll white fondant into a thin, even layer.
2. Cut the fondant into small rectangles. Use a pizza cutter or sharp knife to create clean, straight edges.
3. Lightly curl one end of each rectangle inward.
4. Continue rolling the fondant gently to create the appearance of a diploma or scroll.
5. Allow the diplomas to rest for 5 to 10 minutes so they begin to hold their shape.
6. Roll gold fondant into a thin strip.
7. Wrap the gold strip around the center of each diploma like a ribbon.
8. Secure the ribbon with a small amount of water or edible glue.

How to Make Fondant Graduation Caps



1. Roll black fondant slightly thicker than you would for flat decorations. The fondant should be sturdy enough to hold its shape.
2. Cut a small black square for the top of each graduation cap.
3. Roll another piece of black fondant into a small ball.
4. Flatten the top and bottom of the ball to create a short cylinder.
5. Allow the cap pieces to dry separately before assembling them. Preparing the pieces one day ahead will give them additional time to firm up.
6. Attach the black square to the top of the cylinder with a small amount of water or edible glue.
7. To make the tassel, roll gold fondant into a long, thin rope.
8. Cut a piece approximately 1 inch long.
9. Flatten one end of the rope slightly.
10. Use a fondant tool or small knife to add horizontal details along the rope and vertical lines along the flattened end.
11. Attach the tassel to the graduation cap.
12. Add a small black fondant ball to the center of the cap to cover the end of the tassel.
13. Allow the completed toppers to dry slightly before placing them on the cupcakes.

Tip: Lightly dust the work surface and rolling pin with cornstarch if the fondant becomes sticky.

How to Decorate the Graduation Cupcakes

1. Make sure the cupcakes are completely cool before decorating.
2. Fit piping bags with different large and small star tips.
3. Fill the piping bags with the prepared buttercream colors.
4. Pipe swirls, stars, rosettes, or layered designs onto each cupcake using steady pressure.
5. Vary the piping tips and color combinations to create an assortment of coordinated designs.
6. Place a fondant graduation cap, diploma, or another themed decoration on each cupcake.
7. Add gold pearl sprinkles or other decorations around the toppers.
8. For additional shine, brush the gold fondant accents with edible gold luster dust.
9. Arrange the finished cupcakes on a tiered stand or dessert platter.

Styling and Color Ideas

These graduation cupcakes can be adapted to fit nearly any celebration.



Classic Graduation

Use black, white, and gold for a timeless graduation design.

School Spirit

Tint the buttercream in the graduate's official school colors.

Modern and Minimal

Use black and white buttercream with a small amount of metallic gold or silver.

Elegant Celebration

Use soft neutrals, pearl sprinkles, and metallic fondant accents.

Bright and Playful

Use bold school colors with contrasting sprinkles and multiple piping styles.

Pro Tips for the Best Graduation Cupcakes

- Make the fondant toppers one or two days in advance so they have time to firm up.
- Use room-temperature ingredients for a smoother cupcake batter.
- Do not overmix the batter after adding the flour.
- Allow the cupcakes to cool completely before piping the buttercream.
- Add food color gradually. Liqua-Gel® Food Colors are concentrated, so a small amount goes a long way.
- Prepare all buttercream colors at the same time to help keep the shades consistent.
- Use multiple piping tips to give the cupcake display more visual variety.
- Store fondant toppers in a dry container at room temperature rather than refrigerating them.
- Add sprinkles and fondant decorations shortly before displaying the cupcakes for the freshest presentation.



Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use a boxed cake mix?

Yes. A white or vanilla boxed cake mix is a convenient option. Prepare it according to the package instructions and gently fold crushed chocolate sandwich cookies into the batter before baking.

Can I make the cupcakes ahead of time?

The cupcakes can be baked one day in advance. Once completely cool, store them in an airtight container at room temperature. Decorate them the following day.

How far in advance can I make the fondant toppers?

The fondant graduation caps and diplomas can be made several days in advance. Store them in a dry, covered container at room temperature.

How can I match the graduate's school colors?

Use Chefmaster Liqua-Gel® Food Colors to tint the buttercream. Begin with a small amount of color, mix thoroughly, and gradually add more until you achieve the desired shade.

Can I skip the handmade fondant decorations?

Yes. Store-bought graduation picks, edible images, chocolate decorations, sprinkles, or small cookies can be used instead.

Can I use different cupcake flavors?

Absolutely. Chocolate, vanilla, red velvet, confetti, or the graduate's favorite cake flavor can all work with this decorating concept.

How should I store the decorated cupcakes?

Store the cupcakes in an airtight container in a cool room for up to one day. If refrigeration is necessary, allow them to return to room temperature before serving for the best texture and flavor.



Can the cupcakes be packaged individually?

Yes. Place each cupcake in a clear cupcake box and finish it with ribbon, a graduation tag, or a personalized label. Individually packaged cupcakes make excellent party favors and gifts.

Celebrate Every Achievement

These Star of the Show Graduation Cupcakes combine nostalgic cookies and cream flavor with celebration-worthy decorations. From the colorful buttercream to the handcrafted graduation caps and diplomas, every detail can be personalized for the graduate and their achievement.

Serve them as the centerpiece of a graduation dessert table, package them as party favors, or create a special box for the guest of honor. No matter how they are presented, these cupcakes are a sweet way to celebrate the hard work, memories, and exciting opportunities ahead.

Share your graduation cupcake creations with us and tag [@chefmaster](#). We would love to see the school colors and designs you create!