



Pale Ale Pineapple Brown Sugar Cupcakes

Sweet, but a little sour, pineapple is a fruit that brings so many flavors to any recipe it touches. These sweet treats get an added boost from a pale ale that's made with hop varieties that present mango and other tropical fruit flavors. A gentle and floral pale ale also pairs very well with this three-bite dessert. This recipe comes from chef Erin Austin, who owns the Cupcake Brewery in North Carolina. Austin makes delicious baked treats, not beer, but regularly uses the state's generous craft beer offerings to enhance her stellar recipes.

CUPCAKE BREWERY

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

CUPCAKES

- 1 cup (2 sticks) salted butter
- 1¼ cups firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 eggs
- 1 (15-ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained and juice reserved
- 4¼ cups cake flour
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 (12-ounce) bottle pale ale

ICING

- 1 cup (2 sticks) salted butter
- 1½ cups firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 4 cups confectioners' sugar, plus more as needed
- 2 tablespoons half-and-half, as needed
- Candied pineapple (optional)

Note: The recipe will work best if all ingredients are at room temperature.

1 MAKE THE CUPCAKES: Preheat the oven to 350°F and line muffin cups with paper liners.

2 Cream the butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar together in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add the vanilla. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, until well blended. Slowly add ¼ cup of the reserved pineapple juice.

3 Combine the cake flour and baking powder in a medium mixing bowl. Add one-third of the flour mixture to the butter mixture, using the electric mixer on low speed, until just combined. Add the milk, beating until just combined. Add another one-third of the flour mixture to the batter, beating until just combined. Add the pale ale. Add the remaining one-third of the dry mixture, beating until just combined. Fold in the crushed pineapple until evenly distributed.

4 Divide the batter equally among the prepared muffin tins. Bake for 17 minutes, or until just lightly golden. Cool completely on wire racks, about 45 minutes.

5 MAKE THE ICING: Melt ½ cup of the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the brown sugar and vanilla until well mixed. Add the remaining ½ cup butter and stir until slightly thickened, like a runny caramel, about 17 minutes. Remove the mixture from the heat and let cool to room temperature.

6 Pour the confectioners' sugar into a large mixing bowl. Slowly mix in the brown sugar mixture with an electric mixer until the frosting is light and fluffy. (If the icing is too stiff, slowly add the half-and-half, 1 tablespoon at a time, until it's spreadable. If the icing is too thin, add more confectioners' sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, until spreadable.)

7 Pipe the icing on the cooled cupcakes and top each one with a small piece of candied pineapple, if using.

Makes 24 cupcakes

