

THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES



Banana Caramel Whoopie Pies (from Annie's Eats, who cobbled the pieces together from Martha Stewart [cookies] and David Lebovitz's *The Perfect Scoop* [caramel sauce, which I've adapted])

If you don't want to make swiss meringue buttercream, cream cheese frosting with caramel sauce would be great. If you don't want to make caramel sauce, plain cream cheese frosting would still be good.

For the caramel sauce:

- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup water
- 1 teaspoon light corn syrup
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

For the cookies:

- 2 cups (9.6 ounces) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup mashed banana (from about 2 small bananas)
- ½ cup sour cream
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (3.5 ounces) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (3.5 ounces) light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

For the filling:

- 2 large egg whites, at room temperature
- ½ cup (3.5 ounces) granulated sugar
- pinch salt
- 11 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ½ cup caramel sauce
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. For the caramel sauce: Add the sugar, water, and corn syrup to a 2-quart saucepan. Cover and heat over medium-high heat until simmering, then remove the cover and let simmer until the mixture is a deep amber color, swirling the pan occasionally at first and more often as the sugar browns. Add the cream, which will foam violently, and stir over medium-low heat to combine. Remove from the heat and stir in the salt and vanilla extract. Let the sauce cool to room temperature. (Caramel can be made up to a week in advance.)

2. For the cookies: Adjust a rack to the middle position and heat the oven to xx degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone mats. In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, and baking soda. In a small bowl, whisk together the banana and sour cream.
3. Place the butter in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or a large mixing bowl if you're using a hand-held mixer). Beat the butter on medium-low speed until it's smooth, then add the salt and both sugars. Continue beating on medium until the mixture is light and fluffy, about 2 minutes, scraping the sides of the bowl as needed. With the mixer running, add the egg and vanilla extract. Reduce the mixer speed to low and gradually add half of the flour mixture, then all of the banana mixture, then the remaining flour mixture. Continue mixing on low just until evenly combined.
4. Transfer the dough to a large piping bag fitted with a ½-inch round tip (or a ziploc bag with a ½-inch opening cut into a corner). Pipe 1-inch rounds of dough onto the prepared baking sheets with 1 inch of space between them. Bake until firm, about 10 minutes. Transfer the baking sheets to cooling racks; allow the cookies to cool on the pans for 5 minutes, then transfer them directly to the cooling rack.
5. For the buttercream: In the stainless steel bowl of a stand mixer (or a large stainless steel bowl if using a hand-held mixer), combine the egg whites, sugar, and salt. Set the bowl over a saucepan containing 1 inch of simmering water, making sure the bottom of the bowl does not touch the water. Whisk constantly until the mixture reaches 160 degrees.
6. Fit the mixer with the whisk attachment; beat the egg white mixture on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form and it has cooled to room temperature, about 6 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to medium and add the butter 1 tablespoon at a time, adding more once each addition has been incorporated. Increase the mixer speed to medium-high and beat until the buttercream is smooth and holds peaks, 3-5 minutes. Add the caramel sauce and vanilla; mix on low until incorporated.
7. Spread about 2 tablespoons of buttercream over the flat side of half of the cookies. Top with the remaining cookies, flat sides down. Serve immediately, or cover tightly and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 days, bringing to room temperature before serving.