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Recipe from ***Baking Chez Moi*** by Dorie Greenspan. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York, NY. Copyright 2014. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Tiger Cakes

Makes 24 small cakes

Although these sound as if they might be a health food or energy bar, they're really a traditional French pastry made with egg whites, almond flour and lots of butter. The addition of finely chopped chocolate that melts and stripes the little cakes explains their name. It's hard not to fall for buttery almonds and chocolate, but it was the texture, as well as the flavor, of these that grabbed me: The cakes have a little spring in their crumb and just enough chew to make the flavor last and last.

Most pâtisseries finish tiger cakes with a dab of chocolate, usually a rosette of ganache, a nice flourish. My own preference is to dip the cakes in chocolate – although the glaze hides the tiger stripes, it intensifies the chocolate flavor – but it is entirely optional.

For the Cakes

3 large egg whites, at room temperature
1 cup (100 grams) almond flour
2/3 cup (132 grams) sugar
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 stick (8 tablespoons); 4 ounces; 113 grams) unsalted butter
3 ounces (85 grams) bittersweet chocolate, very finely chopped

For the Glaze (optional)

2 ounces (57 grams) semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
1/4 cup (60 ml) heavy cream

TO MAKE THE CAKES: Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter (or spray) the molds of two mini muffin tins. (You'll have enough batter to make 24 cakes.)

Put the whites in a medium bowl and whisk them just enough to break them up, then add the almond flour. Using a flexible spatula, stir until the flour is evenly moistened, then mix in the sugar, all-purpose flour, salt and vanilla.

Bring the butter to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat, or do this in a microwave oven. Gradually add the melted butter to the batter, stirring with the conviction that all the butter will be absorbed – and it will be. You'll have a thick batter with a beautiful sheen. Stir in the chopped chocolate. (If it's more convenient, you can cover the batter and keep it in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.) Divide the batter evenly among the molds.

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Bake the cakes for 15 to 18 minutes, or until they are puffed and golden and spring back when gently poked. A toothpick inserted into the center of a cake will come out clean. Transfer the pans to a rack and wait for 2 minutes, then turn out the cakes. If you've got a few that are reluctant to pop out, rap the pan against the counter to free them. Cool the cakes until they are only just warm or, if you want to glaze them, until they reach room temperature.

TO GLAZE THE CAKES (OPTIONAL): Put the chopped chocolate in a small microwave-safe bowl and heat it for about 90 seconds at 50% power. You can melt it if you'd like, but what's more important is that it be warm and soft and that the bowl be warm too. (You've got so little chocolate and cream that you want to give it a head start toward ganachehood.)

Bring the cream to a boil in the microwave. Pour the cream over the chocolate, let it sit for 30 seconds and then gently stir the ganache, starting at the center of the bowl and working your way out, until you have a smooth, glossy glaze.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. One by one, dip the bottom or the tops of the cakes into the ganache, twirling each one slightly as you lift it out of the chocolate, so that the excess drips back into the bowl and place ganache side up on the baking sheet. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes, or just long enough to set the glaze.

SERVING: I enjoy these with a rich espresso or cappuccino, but they're good with tea and nice with ice cream.

STORING: Stored in a covered container, the cakes will keep at room temperature for about 2 days. If you'd like, you can pack them airtight and freeze them for up to 2 months. Also, the batter can be covered tightly and refrigerated for up to 3 days; use it directly from the fridge.