



**Pine Nut Praline**  
 ¾ cup (150 g) superfine (caster) sugar  
 3 tablespoons (45 ml) water  
 ¾ cup (135 g) pine nuts

**Cupcakes**  
 3 ounces (90 g) dark chocolate, coarsely chopped  
 ⅓ cup (90 ml) light (single) cream  
 1 cup (150 g) all-purpose (plain) flour  
 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder  
 1 teaspoon baking powder

⅛ teaspoon salt  
 ⅓ cup (90 g) butter, softened  
 1 cup (200 g) superfine (caster) sugar  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (essence)  
 2 large eggs, lightly beaten  
 12 small squares dark or milk chocolate

**Chocolate Buttercream**  
 3 ounces (90 g) milk chocolate, coarsely chopped  
 ½ cup (125 g) butter, softened  
 ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract (essence)  
 ½ tablespoon milk  
 ½ cup (75 g) confectioners' (icing) sugar, sifted

## CHOCOLATE PRALINE CUPCAKES

Preheat the oven to 325°F (170C/gas 3). • Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper baking cups. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. • **Pine Nut Praline:** Place the sugar and water in a small saucepan over low heat until melted and pale gold, 5–10 minutes. • Add the pine nuts and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. • Pour onto the prepared baking sheet and leave to harden for 20 minutes. • Break half the praline into small shards and reserve for decorating. Process the other half into fine crumbs. • **Cupcakes:** Melt the chocolate and cream in a double boiler over barely simmering water. Remove from the heat and let cool. • Sift the flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt into a small bowl. • Beat the butter, sugar, and vanilla in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until pale and creamy. • Add the eggs in one at a time, beating until just blended after each addition. • With mixer on low

speed, add the mixed dry ingredients and melted chocolate. • Stir the praline crumbs in by hand. • Put a tablespoon of the batter into the prepared cups. Place a chocolate square on top and cover with batter, filling each one three-quarters full. • Bake for 25–30 minutes, until golden brown and firm to the touch. • Place on a rack and let cool completely. • **Chocolate Buttercream:** Melt the chocolate in a double boiler over barely simmering water. Remove from the heat and let cool. • Beat the butter and vanilla in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until pale and creamy. • Pour in the milk and cooled chocolate, beating until blended. Gradually add the sugar, beating until blended. • Spoon the buttercream into a pastry bag fitted with a star-shaped nozzle and pipe onto the cupcakes. • Decorate with the shards of pine nut praline.

MAKES: 12 PREPARATION: 50 MINUTES COOKING: 25–30 MINUTES LEVEL: 2

