**GHOST CUPCAKES**

FOR THE CUPCAKES:

1 1/2 sticks of butter - softened

1 3/4 cups of granulated sugar

2 eggs

1 Tablespoon of Vanilla

1 Tablespoon of baking powder

1/4 teaspoon of salt

2 3/4 cups of flour

1 1/2 cups of half n half

Purple food coloring gel

FOR THE PURPLE FROSTING:

2 pounds of powdered sugar (32 ounce package)

1 cup of vegetable shortening (Crisco)

2 sticks of butter - softened

3 - 4 Tablespoons of heavy cream

Purple food coloring gel

FOR THE GHOST COVER

Store bought Fondant - white (see notes)

Extra small candy disks in white - purple and black

Large Marshmallows

HERE'S WHAT YOU DO:

First, make the cupcakes;  In the mixing bowl of a stand mixer, place the softened butter, sugar, eggs, and vanilla, and mix until well blended, scraping down the sides of the mixing bowl and mixing until smooth. In a separate bowl, add the flour, baking powder and salt, and mix to blend.  Add the flour mixture a little at a time, alternating with the half n half, until all flour and half n half have been added, and blending between additions.  Scrape the sides of the mixing bowl, and mix on high speed for one minute. Remove mixing bowl from mixer, and scoop out about 1/3 of the cupcake batter into another bowl, and place about 1/4 of a teaspoon of Purple food coloring gel in the middle of the cupcake batter in the bowl.   Swirl the food coloring gel through the batter with a spoon, but leave it swirled, and do not mix the food coloring into the batter completely. (see photos)  Place 24 cupcake liners in a 24 count muffin tin or 2 12 count tins.  Fill the liners about 1/2 way with the plain batter, and then add the swirled batter on top of the plain batter, filling the liners about 3/4 of the way full, and bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.  When the cupcakes are done, remove from the oven to a wire rack, and let them cool completely.

Make the Frosting.  This is a thick/stabilized frosting, so it will be thick.   While the cupcakes are baking, and cooling; place 2 sticks of butter in the mixing bowl of a stand mixer, and mix with the whisk attachment until the butter is light and fluffy.  Add the vegetable shortening, and mix until well blended.  Add 2 Tablespoons of cream, and blend on low until well mixed.  Add the powdered sugar, a little at a time, mixing between additions until all the powdered sugar is added.  Add the additional cream if the Frosting is too thick. Drop about 4 or 5 drops of Purple food coloring gel into the Frosting, and turn the mixer on and right back off again, 3 or 4 times, to swirl the food coloring through the Frosting, but DO NOT MIX the purple food coloring gel into the frosting, leave it swirled. Place in the refrigerator.

Roll out the Fondant on a piece of parchment paper, until it's thin.  Cut out the Ghosts (one ghost per cupcake) with a metal icing spatula; using the metal spatula, cut out about 4 inch disks, in a scalloped patter around the edges, (see photos) so the Ghosts will drape.  Set aside on the parchment paper.

When the cupcakes are cool, place the frosting in a pastry bag, and with a large tip, swirl the frosting onto the cupcakes coming up to a point.  When all cupcakes have been frosted, place one of the large marshmallows on top of the swirl, and push down a little, securing the marshmallow on top of the frosting.  Place the cut out Fondant Ghosts on top of the marshmallow, and place two of the black candy disks on the Fondant for the Ghosts eyes, pressing them gently into the Fondant.  Serve immediately. Enjoy!

NOTE:  I used Great Value Fondant - white - found at Wal-Mart, and Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market stores.  It worked just as well as the other Brands, was easy to use, and handle, rolled out like a dream, and held the Ghosts shape.  When working with Fondant, a cool setting is best; if it's hot, the Fondant will droop.  If you're not serving the cupcakes as soon as you assemble them, I would suggest not cutting the Ghosts out until 3 hours before serving the cupcakes, and leaving them on the parchment paper in a cool place, but NOT the refrigerator.  The Fridge tends to dry the Fondant out, and it will crack, and that won't be a good look for your Ghosts.  You can Frost the cupcakes ahead of time, and put the Marshmallows on the frosting, and place the cupcakes in the refrigerator.  When you're ready to serve the cupcakes, roll out the Fondant like the instructions above state, and cut out the Ghosts; this can be done up to 3 hours ahead of time, then just place the Ghosts over the marshmallows, add the eyes, and serve.  Enjoy!

ALSO:  If your Fondant Ghost is a little too long after you drape it over the marshmallow, simply snip off the fondant around the bottom of the Ghost, so that the swirled frosting is visible.