baking powder, and salt into medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat room-temperature butter in large bowl until smooth. Add sugar and beat until light and fluffy. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating until well blended after each addition. Add sour cream and vanilla extract and beat just until blended. Add flour mixture in 3 additions, beating just until incorporated after each addition. Transfer cake batter to prepared baking dish; spread batter evenly with rubber spatula or offset spatula. Squeeze small handfuls of topping together to form small clumps. Drop topping clumps evenly over cake batter, covering completely (topping will be thick).

Bake cake until tester inserted into center comes out clean and topping is deep golden brown and slightly crisp, about 1 hour. Cool cake in dish on rack at least 30 minutes. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cool completely. Cover and let stand at room temperature.

Cut cake into squares and serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

## BANANA CUPCAKES WITH PEANUT BUTTER FROSTING

**MAKES 12** A classic combination in an adorable little package. The cupcakes, which are reminiscent of banana bread, would be a great breakfast treat (with or without the frosting).

*cupcakes*

- 1¼ cups all purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 very ripe large bananas, peeled
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk

*frosting*

- 1½ cups powdered sugar
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
- ½ cup smooth peanut butter (do not use old-fashioned or freshly ground)
- Chopped lightly salted roasted peanuts (optional)

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**CUPCAKES** Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 350°F. Line 12 standard (⅓-cup) muffin cups with paper liners. Whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in medium bowl to blend. Mash bananas with fork in another medium bowl until smooth. Mix sour cream and vanilla into bananas.

Using electric mixer, beat sugar and butter in large bowl until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add egg and egg yolk and beat until well blended. Add flour mixture in 3 additions alternately with banana-sour cream mixture in 2 additions, beginning and ending with flour mixture and beating just until blended after each addition. Divide batter among prepared muffin cups (generous ¼ cup for each).

Bake cupcakes until tester inserted into center of each comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Transfer cupcakes to rack and let cool completely.

**FROSTING** Sift powdered sugar into large bowl. Add cream cheese, butter, and peanut butter. Using electric mixer, beat mixture until smooth. Spread frosting over top of cupcakes, dividing equally. Sprinkle lightly with chopped peanuts, if desired. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.

## CHOCOLATE MAYONNAISE CAKE

**10 TO 12 SERVINGS** Mayonnaise replaces the oil that's typically used in chocolate cakes. It gives this cake—which would make the ideal birthday cake—an incredibly moist and tender texture. Serve with glasses of ice-cold milk.

*cake*

- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate (do not exceed 61% cacao), chopped
- ⅔ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1¾ cups boiling water
- 2¾ cups all purpose flour
- 1¼ teaspoons baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup (packed) dark brown sugar
- 1⅓ cups mayonnaise (do not use reduced-fat or fat-free)
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

*frosting*

- 10 ounces bittersweet chocolate (do not exceed 61% cacao), chopped
- 1½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

*special equipment*

Three 8-inch-diameter cake pans with 1½-inch-high sides

**CAKE** Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour three 8-inch-diameter cake pans with 1½-inch-high sides. Combine chopped chocolate and cocoa powder in medium metal bowl. Add 1¾ cups boiling water and whisk until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth.

Sift flour, baking soda, and baking powder into another medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat both sugars and mayonnaise in large bowl until well blended, 2 to 3 minutes. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating until well blended after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Add flour mixture in 4 additions alternately with chocolate mixture in 3 additions, beating until blended after each addition and occasionally scraping down sides of bowl. Divide batter among prepared cake pans (about 2⅓ cups for each).

Bake cakes until tester inserted into center comes out clean, 30 to 32 minutes. Cool cakes in pans on racks 20 minutes. Run small knife around sides of cakes to loosen. Carefully invert cakes onto racks and let cool completely.

**FROSTING** Place chopped chocolate in medium metal bowl; set bowl over saucepan of simmering water and stir until chocolate is melted and smooth. Carefully remove bowl from over water; let melted chocolate cool until lukewarm, stirring occasionally.

Using electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until smooth and creamy. Sift powdered sugar over butter and beat until well blended, about 2 minutes. Beat in vanilla. Add melted chocolate and beat until well blended and smooth, occasionally scraping down sides of bowl.

Place 1 cake layer on platter. Spread ¾ cup frosting over top of cake layer to edges. Top with second cake layer; spread ¾ cup frosting over. Top with third cake layer. Spread remaining frosting decoratively over top and sides of cake. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover with cake dome and let stand at room temperature.

Cut cake into wedges and serve. ■

*Matt Lewis and Renato Poliafito are the owners of Baked bake shops in Brooklyn and Charleston, South Carolina. They are also the authors of* Baked: New Frontiers in Baking.