Red Velvet Cake
Courtesy Chef Joanne Chang AB’91
www.flourbakery.com

Makes one double layer 8 inch cake to serve 10-12

12 tablespoons (1 ½ sticks; 175 grams) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 ¼ cups (450 grams) sugar
3 eggs
2 yolks
3 ¾ cups (460 grams) cake flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
1 ½ teaspoons salt
½ cup (60 grams) cocoa powder
¾ cup (180 grams) buttermilk
¾ cup (170 grams) crème fraiche
1/3 cup red food coloring
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Creamy Vanilla Frosting, recipe follows

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease and flour two 8 inch cake pans.

Using the paddle attachment of a stand mixer, beat butter and sugar together for 2-3 minutes until light and fluffy. Scrape the sides and bottom of bowl a few times to make sure you get any butter clinging to the sides. Whisk together the eggs and yolks and slowly add to mixer while mixer is on low speed. Scrape again and mix on medium speed for 1-2 minutes until mixture is homogenous.

Meanwhile sift together cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cocoa powder. In a small bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, crème fraiche, red food coloring, and vanilla extract. With the mixer on the lowest speed, add about 1/3 of the liquid mixture to the mixing bowl and mix until the dry is just barely combined into the butter. Immediately pour about ½ of the liquid mixture into the mixing bowl and continue to mix on lowest speed until the mixture is almost thoroughly combined. Stop the mixer and scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl well. Resume mixing on lowest speed; add another 1/3 of the dry and mix until almost entirely incorporated. Add the rest of the liquid mixture and mix until just barely incorporated.

At this point it’s best to finish the mixing by hand. Remove the bowl from the mixer and fold the remainder of the dry mixture into the batter. Fold until the dry and batter are homogenous, making sure to mix in well any batter clung to the side and bottom of the bowl. Divide the batter evenly into two prepared cake pans and bake in oven for about 55-60 minutes, or until the tops are firm and the cake springs back when you lightly press it in the middle. Remove from oven and let cool in pans on a cooling rack.
When cakes are cool, remove from pans and trim the tops of the cakes off to level them (they will have rounded a bit in the oven – these scraps make for great nibbling as you are baking). Place one cake on an a large flat plate or platter (use a cake turner if you have it) and spoon about a cup of creamy frosting on top; use an offset spatula to evenly spread the frosting to the edges of the cake. Carefully place the second cake on top (place it upside down for the most even and sharp edges) and spoon about another cup of frosting on top of the cake. Spread the frosting to the edges of the cake and then down the sides of the cake, smoothing the frosting as well as you can and covering the entire cake with a thin layer of frosting. This is called a crumb coat; it will keep any loose crumbs from migrating to the surface of the finished cake. Spoon another cup or so of frosting on the cake and spread it evenly across the top and sides again. This is the final finishing layer of frosting. Use remainder of frosting to pipe an edge along the top and/or the bottom edge of the cake as desired.

### Creamy Vanilla Frosting
Makes about 5 cups, enough to fill and frost a double layer 8 inch cake

- 2 cups (480 grams) milk
- ½ cup (70 grams) all purpose flour
- 2 cups (400 grams) sugar
- 1 pound (4 sticks; 454 grams) unsalted butter, at room temperature, cut into cubes
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Whisk milk and flour in a medium saucepan over medium heat until the mixture starts to thicken and becomes pasty, about 3-4 minutes. Once it becomes visibly thicker, count to 30 while continuously whisking. Remove from heat and scrape into a mixing bowl for a stand mixer.

Let mixture sit for about an hour at room temperature uncovered and give it a whisk every 10 minutes or so to help it cool off. When it's at room temperature, paddle the mixture on low speed and slowly add the sugar until it is mixed in. Add the butter piece by piece with the mixer still on low speed until it is all added; add the vanilla extract and salt.

Turn the speed up to medium and mix for 6-8 minutes. The frosting will look curdled and clumpy at first and then gradually it will start to look creamy. When the frosting is entirely smooth it is ready to use.