

Josie Rea-Tomlinson's Superior Cupcakes

Los Angeles, California

Josie Rea-Tomlinson began baking when she was 7. The 13-year-old has already constructed a wedding cake for 150 and spends as much time reading baking books as she does studying to stay at the top of her class. In an era when the young can be whiplashed by choices, her destiny has always been set. "I'll go to college and everything, but I'm a baker," she says. She says of this recipe, "I wanted a perfect cupcake and tried different recipes almost every day one summer. This recipe borrows the best of at least a dozen versions. Equal parts icing to cake is the style in cupcakes today, but I wanted something closer to a glaze. I am not a big fan of numbing by sugar. Those who prefer icing that will mound can add more powdered sugar and soft butter to the recipe. My friends always think they want more icing, but after they have one of these they change their minds."

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
4 large eggs, at room temperature
6 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, melted and cooled until warm, not hot
1 cup buttermilk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Vanilla Icing (recipe follows)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two 12-cup cupcake tins with cupcake papers.
2. Sift the flour and baking soda together into a small bowl.
3. In a large bowl, cream the butter until smooth with an electric mixer on medium speed. Add the granulated and brown sugars and beat until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the chocolate, mixing until well incorporated. Add the flour mixture in three parts, alternating with the buttermilk and vanilla. With each addition, beat until the ingredients are incorporated, but do not overbeat. Using a rubber spatula, scrape down the batter in the bowl to make sure the ingredients are well blended and the batter is smooth.
4. Carefully spoon the batter into the cupcake tins, filling the cups about three-quarters full. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until a cake tester inserted in the center of a cupcake comes out clean.
5. Cool the cupcakes in the tins for 15 minutes. Remove from the tins and cool completely on a wire rack before icing.

Makes 24 cupcakes

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