

## THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES



### **Banana Cream Pie Cupcakes** (from Annie's Eats and Cooks Illustrated's Yellow Cake recipe)

Makes 24 cupcakes

#### Filling:

1 cup half-and-half  
¼ cup (1.75 ounces) sugar, divided  
Pinch of salt  
3 large egg yolks  
1½ tablespoons cornstarch  
2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces  
¾ teaspoon vanilla extract

#### Cake:

2½ cups (10 ounces) cake flour, plus extra for dusting pans  
1¼ teaspoon baking powder  
¼ teaspoon baking soda  
¾ teaspoon table salt  
1¾ cups (12.25 ounces) sugar  
10 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly  
1 cup buttermilk, at room temperature  
3 tablespoons vegetable oil  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
6 large egg yolks plus 3 large egg whites, at room temperature

#### Topping:

1½ cups heavy cream  
½ cup (1 ounce) powdered sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1½ bananas, peeled and sliced

1. To make the filling, heat the half-and-half, 3 tablespoons of the sugar, and the salt in a saucepan over medium-high heat until simmering, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Meanwhile, combine the egg yolks and remaining 2 tablespoons sugar in a medium bowl and whisk until the sugar has begun to dissolve and the mixture is creamy, about 15 seconds. Whisk in the cornstarch until combined and the mixture is pale yellow and thick, about 30 seconds. When the half-and-half mixture has reached a simmer, slowly add it to the egg yolk mixture to temper, whisking constantly. Return the mixture to the saucepan, scraping the bowl with a rubber spatula. Return the mixture to a simmer over medium heat, whisking constantly, until a few bubbles burst on the surface and the mixture is thickened and glossy, about 30 seconds. Off the heat, whisk in the butter and vanilla. Strain the pastry cream through a fine mesh sieve set over a medium bowl. Press plastic wrap directly on the surface to prevent a skin from forming and refrigerate until cold and set, at least 3 hours and up to 2 days.

2. To make the cupcakes, adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees. Line 24 cupcake wells with paper liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and 1½ cups (10.5 ounces) sugar together in a large bowl. In a 4-cup liquid measuring cup or medium bowl, whisk together the melted butter, buttermilk, oil, vanilla, and yolks.

3. In the clean bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites at medium-high speed until foamy, about 30 seconds. With the machine running, gradually add the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (1.75 ounces) sugar; continue to beat until stiff peaks just form, 30 to 60 seconds (whites should hold peak but mixture should appear moist). Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
4. Add the flour mixture to the now-empty mixing bowl fitted with the whisk attachment. With the mixer running at low speed, gradually pour in the butter mixture and mix until almost incorporated (a few streaks of dry flour will remain), about 15 seconds. Stop the mixer and scrape the whisk and sides of the bowl. Return the mixer to medium-low speed and beat until smooth and fully incorporated, 10 to 15 seconds.
5. Using a rubber spatula, stir  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the whites into the batter to lighten the mixture, then add the remaining whites and gently fold into the batter until no white streaks remain. Divide the batter evenly between the cupcake liners. Lightly tap the pans against the counter 2 or 3 times to dislodge any large air bubbles.
6. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake comes out clean, 18-20 minutes. Cool the cupcakes in the pans on a wire rack for 5 minutes, then remove them from the wells and cool completely on a wire rack.
7. Use a paring knife to remove a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch-diameter cone from the center of each cupcake; discard the cones. Spoon 2 teaspoons of pastry cream into the well of each cupcake, then top with a slice of banana.
8. To make the topping, beat the heavy cream on medium-high speed in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment until frothy. Add the sugar and vanilla and beat until the mixture holds stiff peaks, scraping the bowl as necessary.
9. Pipe the whipped cream onto the cupcakes. Top with a slice of banana.