RED VELVET CUPCAKES
Prepared for the Edible Academy Juneteenth Celebration
by Millie Peartree
Makes 24 cupcakes

Ingredients
For the Cupcakes
- 2 ½ cups cake flour
- 1 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 teaspoon cocoa powder
- 1 ½ cups vegetable oil
- 1 cup buttermilk, at room temperature
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons Hibiscus syrup
- 1 teaspoon white distilled vinegar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the Cream Cheese Frosting
- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 4 cups sifted confectioners’ sugar
- 1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks), softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon Hibiscus Syrup
- Fresh Hibiscus flowers for garnish

Sauce
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup dried hibiscus flowers (about 1 ½ ounces)
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon peel
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lime peel
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange peel

Instructions
Bring 2 cups water to boil in small saucepan. Stir in hibiscus flowers. Remove from heat; let steep uncovered 10 minutes. Pour hibiscus mixture through fine-mesh sieve set over bowl, pressing on solids to extract all liquid; discard solids. Return hibiscus liquid to same saucepan. Add sugar; bring to boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Boil gently over medium heat until liquid is reduced to 1 cup, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in lemon peel, lime peel, and orange peel; steep 10 minutes. Strain sauce into bowl. Cover. Chill until cold, at least 2 hours. DO AHEAD: Can be made 3 days ahead. Keep chilled. If the frosting is a little too think add more powdered sugar to stabilize it.