THE WEDNESDAY CHEF

Plain Vanilla Cake
Makes one 8-inch round cake

1⁄2 cup (120ml) buttermilk

2 eggs, at room temperature

1 tablespoon vanilla extract (or the scraped seeds of 1 vanilla bean)

3⁄4 cup (150g) granulated sugar

1 1⁄2 cups (195g) all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1⁄4 teaspoon baking soda

1⁄4 teaspoon salt

8 tablespoons (115g) unsalted butter, at room temperature

3 tablespoons mild-flavored vegetable oil

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-inch round pan with butter and line the bottom and sides with parchment paper. In a small bowl, whisk the eggs together. Set aside. If using the vanilla seeds, use your fingers to work the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar in a small bowl. Remove any bits of pod that may have come off with the seeds. Set aside.

2. Place the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a bowl and mix with a fork.

3. Using an electric mixer with beaters or a paddle attachment, beat the butter for 30 seconds on medium speed and then gradually add the sugar. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Continue beating on medium speed for another 4 minutes or

until light in color and fluffy. *If* using the vanilla extract, add to the bowl and beat until combined.

4. With the mixer still on medium speed, gradually add the eggs. On low speed, add the flour mixture and then the oil and milk; mix until just combined. Don't overbeat. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl.

5. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Bake in the center of the oven for 40-50 minutes. When a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean, and the cake bounces back when lightly pressed, remove the cake from the oven and let it stand for 10 minutes. Run a knife around the cake to gently release. Invert the cake, peel off the pieces of parchment paper and cool on a wire rack.