david lebovitz's racines cake

- cocoa powder, for preparing the pan

- 10 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped

- 1/2 cup salted butter, cut into pieces

- 1 tablespoon freshly brewed instant espresso

- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

- 6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature

- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

- confectioners' sugar, for dusting the cake (optional) or whipped cream for serving (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350° F (175° C). Grease the bottom and sides of a 9-inch (23-cm) spring-form pan, dust it with a bit of cocoa powder, and then tap out any excess.

Place the chocolate, butter and espresso in a large heatproof bowl. Set over a small saucepan of simmering water and stir until the chocolate and butter have melted and the mixture is smooth. Remove the bowl from the heat and stir in the vanilla, then set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk the egg yolks and the 1/4 cup granulated sugar on medium-high speed until the mixture is light and creamy, about 1 minute.

Place the egg whites in a clean, dry bowl and using a hand-held electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, whisk the egg whites on low speed until they begin to hold their shape. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons granulated sugar and whisk on high speed until the whites hold soft peaks.

Fold the beaten egg yolks into the melted chocolate mixture, and then fold in half of the whipped egg whites. Fold in the remaining whites, folding just until there are no visible streaks of egg whites. Do not overfold.

Pour the batter into the prepared spring-form pan, and bake until the cake feels as though it's just barely set (it shouldn't feel to firm) in the centre – about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool completely.

Run a knife around the sides of the cake to help loosen it from the pan. Release the sides of the pan and dust the cake with confectioners' sugar (if using).