

<b>01/26/10 - Banana Bread</b>
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I like bananas. Is our compulsion to eat bananas an acquired taste that our mothers nurture in us from birth? Do they truly taste good, eaten straight? This is a topic for debate. No matter which side of the issue you come down on, bananas are a little compact package of nutrition that is widely over-purchased. I like mine just yellow, very small traces of green remaining, and before any sugar-spots appear. At this stage, they still have some chew before they melt into silky sweetness on your tongue. What should I do with bananas that have crossed the line, that are over ripe, soft, turning black, and emitting sickly sweet tropical odors?

Living in a family of four, it is impossible to predict the amount of bananas to purchase every week or whether they will be eaten or not. Banana bread is a delectable solution. This recipe is easy, requires no mixer, and you can add whatever dried fruits or nuts you like. The bread freezes well, is non dairy, and has simple ingredients. This recipe is enough for two breads. If you have only two or three over-ripe bananas, you can practice your math skills, cut the quantities in half, and make only one bread.

1/4 cups packed brown sugar

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup oil

2 cups mashed banana (around 4-5 bananas depending on size)

3 extra large eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 teaspoons baking soda

1/2 cup boiling water

4 cups flour

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 cup chopped pecans

1 cup chopped dates

1 cup chopped dried cherries

Preheat oven to 350° F. Combine first four ingredients in a large mixing bowl and beat with a whisk until well combined. In a separate small bowl or measuring cup, mix boiling water with baking soda, add foaming hot liquid to banana batter, and incorporate.

Crack eggs into a glass bowl or cup, check them, and then add vanilla. Pour eggs into banana mixture. Whisk to combine.

Measure flour and other dry ingredients in a separate bowl. Stir flour mix with a fork to blend. Add flour mix to wet ingredients and whisk to blend. Place all chopped fruits, cherries and or raisins and chopped pecans in batter and gently incorporate.

Prepare two large loaf tins. Grease them with cooking spray. I use the all natural canola oil (Spectrum brand). Divide batter into greased loaf pans. Tamp tins down on counter to remove any air bubbles that may be lurking. Place them on middle rack in oven.

Bake about 30 minutes at set temperature and then, turn heat down to 325° F. and continue baking another 20-30 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean. A tester is a long toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake or bread in this case and withdrawn immediately. If there are wet crumbs clinging to it, the cake is not done. If it comes out clean, the cake is done. Cool breads on a rack about 10 minutes, invert pan, and remove loaf. It is important to cool breads or cakes on a rack since this allows air to circulate under pans while it's cooling. Air circulation results in a better texture. You can eat it after it is cool, or freeze it for later. I freeze one and leave one out.



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