



Photo by: Beth Dreiling
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Cream Cheese-Banana-Nut Bread

Enjoy banana bread without all the guilt with this healthy banana bread recipe. For more recipes like this, see our complete [banana bread recipe](#) collection.

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Yield: Makes 2 loaves



Ingredients

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 1/4 cups chopped pecans, divided | 1/2 teaspoon baking powder |
| 1/4 cup butter, softened | 1/2 teaspoon baking soda |
| 1 (8-oz.) package 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, softened | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 1 cup sugar | 1 cup buttermilk |
| 2 large eggs | 1 1/2 cups mashed very ripe bananas (1 1/4 lb. unpeeled bananas, about 4 medium) |
| 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour | 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract |
| 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour | |

Preparation

If you've never worked with whole wheat flour, accurate measuring is everything. Be sure to spoon the flour into a dry measuring cup (do not pack) rather than scooping the cup into the flour, and level it off with a straight edge. Expect a denser bread with this recipe. It won't rise as much as traditional breads, and the texture will be very moist. (If you use frozen, thawed bananas, you might experience more wet patches throughout the bread.) We liked this version at the taste-testing table, but if you prefer a less dense bread with a little more rise and slightly lighter texture, then double the baking powder but leave the baking soda the same.

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Place 3/4 cup pecans in a single layer on a baking sheet, and bake 12 to 15 minutes or until toasted and fragrant, stirring after 6 minutes.
2. Beat butter and cream cheese at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Gradually add sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition.
3. Combine whole wheat flour and next 4 ingredients; gradually add to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed just until blended after each addition. Stir in bananas, 3/4 cup toasted pecans, and vanilla. Spoon batter into 2 greased and floured 8- x 4-inch loaf pans. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup pecans.
4. Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until a long wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean and sides of bread pull away from pan, shielding with aluminum foil during last 15 minutes to prevent excessive browning, if necessary. Cool bread in pans on wire racks 10 minutes. Remove from pans to wire racks. Let cool 30 minutes.

Note: To make ahead, proceed with recipe as directed through Step 4. Cool loaves completely, and tightly wrap with plastic wrap. Wrap again with aluminum foil. Freeze up to 1 month.

Toasted Coconut-Cream Cheese-Banana-Nut Bread: Reduce pecans to 1 cup. Prepare recipe as directed through Step 1, toasting all pecans. Remove and reserve 1/4 cup toasted pecans. Proceed as directed through Step 3, omitting pecans sprinkled over batter. Bake as directed. Meanwhile, cook 1/4 cup fat-free evaporated milk, 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar, 2 Tbsp. brown sugar, and 1 Tbsp. butter in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly, 3 to 4 minutes or until bubbly. Remove from heat. Stir in 1/4 cup sweetened flaked coconut, reserved toasted pecans, and 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract. Remove bread from oven; immediately spread tops

lightly with coconut mixture. Broil 5 1/2 inches from heat 2 to 3 minutes or until topping starts to lightly brown. Cool in pans on wire racks 20 minutes. Remove from pans to wire racks; cool 30 minutes before slicing.

Cinnamon-Cream Cheese-Banana-Nut Bread: Prepare recipe as directed through Step 3, omitting pecans sprinkled over batter. Stir together 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar, 1/4 cup chopped pecans (not toasted), 1 1/2 tsp. all-purpose flour, 1 1/2 tsp. melted butter, and 1/4 to 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon. Lightly sprinkle mixture over batter in pans. Bake and cool as directed.

Peanut Butter-Cream Cheese-Banana-Nut Bread: Prepare recipe as directed through Step 3, omitting pecans sprinkled over batter. Combine 1/4 cup all-purpose flour and 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar in a small bowl. Cut in 2 Tbsp. creamy peanut butter and 1 1/2 tsp. butter with a pastry blender or fork until mixture resembles small peas. Lightly sprinkle mixture over batter in pans. Bake and cool as directed.

Note:

Prep: 15 min.; Bake: 1 hr., 15 min.; Cool: 40 min. The original recipe was sent to us by Willie Monroe from Homewood, Alabama. To get perfect slices, let the bread cool 30 minutes and then cut with a serrated or electric knife.

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