

BANANA OATMEAL BREAD

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup shortening (Crisco)
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1/2 tsp vanilla
1 cup all purpose flour
1 cup instant or "quick oats" oatmeal
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
OPTIONAL: 1/2 cup walnuts or pecans, chopped medium-to-fine
1 1/2 cup mashed bananas (about 3-4 bananas)
1/4 cup whole milk (see Tips below for adding in
banana liqueur.)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Cream together shortening and sugar.
2. Add to 1., eggs and vanilla beating until light and fluffy.
3. Combine flour, oatmeal, baking soda, salt, & cinnamon in a separate bowl and mix well.
4. Combine egg and sugar mixture with dry mixture and, in 2 or 3 batches, alternately mix in bananas and milk.
4. Pour in a greased 9" X 5" loaf pan.
5. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 to 70 minutes or until a wooden skewer comes out clean. Cover for 10 minutes after removing from oven to cool - this helps keep the moisture in the bread.
6. Run a thin knife around the edges, carefully remove the bread, and place on a rack to cool. Wrap with plastic wrap and aluminum foil. Freezes well. Lots of calories!!

TIPS:

This is always a big hit. Be sure to leave the bananas a little chunky when mashing them up.

I've found that if you don't adequately cook the loaves, they can fall apart easily when slicing. But, you have to be carefully not to overcook them or they will dry out. So, I

suggest using a mini-loaf or Bundt pan. Info for the mini-loafs are below, but I haven't yet tried a Bundt pan, but expect it would work a little better than a loaf pan since the cross-section of the slices would be smaller and therefore less likely to fall apart when slicing.

For mini-loafs, fill the well about 1/3 - 1/2 full and then sprinkle tops as directed below. Bake at 325 degrees for about 20-25 minutes or until you see the tops start to "crack." Allow to sit in the pan for just a couple of minutes and then carefully remove and place on a cooling rack. If you are not going to eat them right away, after they have cooled, seal in an air-tight container or wrap each individually with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

Be careful about using a wooden/bamboo skewer to test for doneness on the mini-loafs as it is easy to hit a chunk of banana and think they aren't done. Makes about 8-12 mini-loafs. Be sure to spray the loaf wells with non-stick spray before you initially fill them and before each baking cycle.

Reduce milk 50% and substitute corresponding amount of banana liqueur (99 Bananas or Creme de Banana). I advise against doing this if you plan on serving it to anyone whom you know is a recovering alcoholic. Same goes for any other recipes that contain alcohol-based products. If you need more banana flavor, you could always use imitation banana flavoring - add flavor to taste.

Add 1/2 cup chopped nuts and/or 1/2 cup chopped raisins or:

In place of plain oatmeal, use 1 cup Bob's Red Mill Old Style Country Muesli mix (most stores), which contains oats, wheat, rye, triticale, barley, almonds, dates, raisins, sunflower seeds & walnuts. You may want to grind this up a little in a food processor first.

Just prior to baking, generously sprinkle brown sugar (light or dark) on top of batter. To keep it from burning, you will have to loosely place "tent" a sheet of aluminum foil over the top about 20-30 minutes through the baking cycle. Note this will extend your baking time a little - about 5-10 minutes.

Also, in place of the brown sugar, and I've found that this works much better with less burning, you can use turbinado sugar or demerara sugar - it's like the raw (coarse) sugar you get in brown packets at some restaurants. I've tried it on the mini-loafs and it didn't burn after 25 minutes, but I have no idea if it will burn after longer baking times, so keep an eye on the full-sized loafs use it for them. Again, generously sprinkle the sugar on the tops - it really makes a huge difference. I use this trick on most of the different "sweet" breads I bake.

Best served warm with a big glass of COLD milk.

I always make a double recipe as this goes fast!

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