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Great taste, less time with this banana bread redux

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Banana Nut Bread Coffee Cake Photos Susie Iventosch

Do you ever have overripe bananas? It always happens to us, because it seems that whenever I buy bananas, we never eat all of them before they start to get mushy and brown. What do you do with mushy bananas? That's when I freeze them for banana bread, which does get gobbled up! But what I have never really liked about my banana bread, is that it takes forever to cook and it never gets completely baked in the very center of the loaf without the top getting too dark and overdone. The center can still be gooey even after 50 minutes of baking. Not ideal.

We had houseguests last weekend, so I bought a beautiful bunch of bananas, which are great for a quick snack. Besides, somehow it looks like you run a professional operation if there are bananas in the fruit basket. At the end of the weekend there were two aging bananas left on the counter, and reluctantly I started thinking about banana bread. After all of these years, I decided to make the banana bread in a square baking

pan instead of the longer and deeper loaf pan. Voilà! Banana Bread Coffee Cake. That was just the ticket and the bread came out perfectly baked on top and cooked, but moist, in the middle and still tasted exactly like banana bread.

Another benefit is that it only takes 20-25 minutes to bake the bread in an 8x8 square pan, so you can make your bread that morning and serve it hot, right out of the oven. If you've ever had banana bread travails like I have, this is your answer. By the way, you don't have to use mushy bananas for your banana bread, but it is a great way to use them up. (I hate wasting food!) If you're not quite ready to make the bread, just freeze the bananas right in the peel and thaw them and peel them just as you're ready to bake with them. Once baked, the banana bread coffee cake also freezes very well. Just wrap it in plastic wrap or foil and freeze in an airtight container.

Banana Nut Bread Coffee Cake
(Makes one 8x8 inch-square coffee cake)

INGREDIENTS

4 oz. butter, softened to room temp (1 stick or 1/2 cup)
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup light brown sugar
2 eggs
2 cups all-purpose flour (can use half whole wheat flour if you prefer)
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
2-3 large ripe bananas, mashed or chopped
3/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts
1 tsp. vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease or spray an 8x8 inch baking dish with cooking spray.

Cream together butter and both sugars until light and fluffy. Add eggs and beat well. Add vanilla and bananas and mix until integrated. Sift flour, baking soda and salt right into the batter and mix well. Fold in chopped nuts.

Turn batter out into prepared pan and bake for approximately 20-25 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean and the cake is golden brown on top. Serve warm or at room temperature.



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