



WELL SEASONED

BY SUZANNE PODHAIZER

Banana Bread on a Scale

Don't have overripe bananas? Worry not! Put the fruit on a parchment-lined baking sheet, and heat them in a 350°F oven until the skins are brown and the fruit is soft. Then proceed with the recipe.

This recipe started years ago with famed pastry chef Dominique Ansel's take on banana bread, but I've modified it in a variety of ways over the years. Some of my changes include the browned butter, cast-iron pan, fruit and nut additions, and cinnamon. Believe it or not, I'm also calling for less sugar than he does. If you like things super sweet, you could use 400 grams of sugar, instead.



FOR THE BREAD

4 large bananas, ripe or overripe
14 tablespoons butter
300 grams sugar
250 grams flour
6 grams salt
5 grams baking powder
3 grams baking soda
2 grams cinnamon
2 grams nutmeg
3 large eggs at room temperature
75 grams dried cranberries
75 grams walnuts, roughly chopped

Preheat the oven to 350°F. If your bananas aren't ripe, see the instructions in the headnote for baking them.

Put the bananas in a large mixing bowl, and mash them roughly with a fork, potato masher or pastry blender.

In a 9-inch cast-iron skillet, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Let it cook until the milk solids rise to the top, fall to the bottom of the pan, and turn a rich, nutty brown color. Turn off the pan and remove it from the heat. Pour the butter into the bowl with the bananas, and stir to combine. You can scrape some of the browned bits from the pan into the bowl, but you'll want to leave a thin coating of butter in the pan, as you'll be using it later to bake the bread.

Place a separate mixing bowl on a kitchen scale, and use the tare button to zero out the weight. Add the dry ingredients from sugar to nutmeg, zeroing out the scale between each one. Whisk to combine. Add the cranberries and walnuts. Whisk



again.

Check the temperature of the banana and butter mixture by feeling the bowl with your hand. If it's warm, but not hot, break the eggs into the bowl and whisk them in until the mixture is fairly smooth.

If the bowl still feels hot to the touch, you could give it a few more minutes, or temper the eggs to prevent them from curdling. You'd do that by whisking a little of the hot banana mixture into the lightly beaten eggs, and then a little more, until you've added a couple of cups. Then, it will be safe to pour the egg mixture into the remaining banana/butter combo.

Once all of the moist ingredients have been mixed together, add the dry ingredients and stir a few times until just combined. The more you stir, the more gluten will develop, and the texture will begin to toughen a bit. It's the same reason you stir minimally when making muffins, pancakes, cakes and so on.

Place the cast-iron pan on a baking sheet and pour in the batter (if you don't think it's well-greased enough, you can always add a bit more butter). If it looks like you'll be filling the pan more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full, stop pouring, grease another small oven-safe vessel, and put the rest of the batter in that.

Bake the bread, rotating the baking pan after 30 minutes in case your oven has hotspots. Continue cooking until the bread is golden brown on top, a poker or toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, and if you gently touch the center of the loaf, it feels solid beneath your finger. This may take an additional 10-30 minutes depending on how warm your pan was when you started, and whether the banana and butter mixture was hot enough to give your batter a bit of a head start.

Let the banana bread cool in the pan for a few minutes, then turn out onto a cooling rack. Or serve it warm straight from the pan.

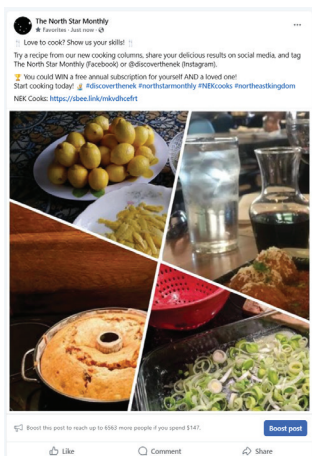
TO SERVE:

I love to slather this sweet bread with a thick layer of cream cheese.

THE **North Star** MONTHLY

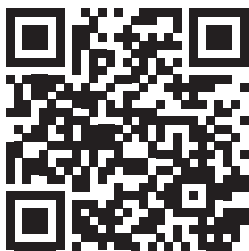
Additional Recipes available at: www.northstarmonthly.com/recipes





Love to cook? Show us your skills!

Try a recipe from our new cooking columns, share your delicious results on social media, and tag The North Star Monthly (Facebook) or @discoverthenek (Instagram).



You could WIN a free annual subscription for yourself AND a loved one!

Start cooking today! #discoverthenek #northstarmonthly #NEKcooks #northeastkingdom

← Follow the QR Code for more NEK Cooks Recipes