

Chocolate Banana Bread

Makes one loaf

This version of banana bread is more cake than bread, and I wouldn't be able to get away with saying "There's banana in it, so it's basically breakfast!" because no, this is not breakfast. This is a chocolatey, buttery, almost decadent thing and probably not appropriate for anyone to eat first thing in the morning. While mascarpone will give you the richest, moistest cake with the best flavor, sour cream or yogurt will get the job done; just make sure they are full-fat.

1/2 cup Demerara sugar (regular sugar will work, too)
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp kosher salt
6 tbsp (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup lightly packed light brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 large egg
5 extremely ripe bananas, 4 coarsely mashed and 1 sliced lengthwise
1/2 cup (4 oz) mascarpone, full-fat sour cream, full-fat yogurt, or labne

1. Preheat the oven to 350F. Spray a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan with a nonstick spray. Sugar the inside of the pan with 1/4 cup of the Demerara sugar (or regular sugar if you don't have Demerara), tapping out any excess.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt together; set aside.
3. Using an electric mixer and a separate medium bowl or a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter, granulated sugar, light brown sugar and vanilla on high speed until the mixture is super light and fluffy, about 3 to 5 minutes. Using a spatula, scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the egg. Beat until well combined and the mixture returns to that previously light, fluffy state, about 2 minutes. With the mixer on low, slowly add the dry ingredients and beat just to blend. Using a spatula, fold in the mashed bananas, followed by the mascarpone, mixing just to blend.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan, smoothing the top. Place the banana halves, cut-side up, on top of the batter. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup Demerara sugar and bake until the sides start to pull away and the cake is baked through in the center (it's a very dense, moist cake, but it should still spring back slightly when pressed in the center), about 90 to 100 minutes.
5. Let cool completely before slicing.