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Banana Chocolate Chip Cake

Makes One 10-inch Bundt Cake, 10-12 Servings

One of my assistants, Judy Epstein, has two teens with terrific taste buds. After we sent home various cakes for them to sample, Cory and Hannah wanted to know when I was finally going to make their favorite, a Banana Chocolate Chip Cake. When I did, it passed muster with flying colors, and that was good enough for me.

Be sure to use mini chips because larger ones will sink to the bottom of the pan. And, for an even-textured cake, take the time to strain the pureed bananas. The finished cake will be so much better. Just ask Cory and Hannah!

AT A GLANCE:

PAN: 10-inch Bundt pan

PAN PREP: Butter generously/flour

OVEN TEMP: 350°F

BAKING TIME: 55 to 60 minutes

DIFFICULTY: Easy

2-1/2 cups sifted cake flour, spooned in and leveled
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon mace
2 large, very ripe bananas
1 teaspoon lemon juice
3/4 cup sour cream
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
3/4 teaspoon banana extract
3/4 cup (1-1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, slightly firm
1-1/4 cups superfine sugar
3 large eggs
1/2 cup mini chocolate chips
1 large recipe Vanilla Glaze (see below)

1. Position the rack in the lower third of the oven. Heat the oven to 350°F. Generously butter a 10-inch Bundt pan, dust with flour, then invert it over the kitchen sink and tap firmly to remove the excess flour. Set aside.

2. In a large bowl, thoroughly whisk together the flour, baking soda, salt, and mace. Set aside.

3. Cut the bananas into 1-inch pieces and place with the lemon juice in the work bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade. Process for 30 seconds, then stop the machine and scrape down the side of the bowl. Process for another 10 seconds, or until the bananas are pureed. Strain the puree through a medium-gauge strainer. You should have a generous cupful. Stir the sour cream and extracts into the bananas and set aside.

Banana Chocolate Chip Cake, (continued)

4. Cut the butter into 1-inch pieces and place in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on medium speed until smooth and lightened in color, about 2 minutes. Add the sugar, 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time, taking 6 to 8 minutes. Blend in the eggs, one at a time, beating thoroughly after each addition, scraping down the side of the bowl as needed.

5. Reduce the mixer speed to low and add the dry ingredients alternately with the banana/sour cream mixture, dividing the flour mixture into four parts and the liquid into three parts, beginning and ending with the flour. Scrape down the side of the bowl, then mix for 10 to 15 seconds longer. Remove the bowl from the machine, and using a large rubber spatula, fold in the mini chocolate chips.

6. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Smooth the surface with the back of a large soup spoon and bake for 55 to 60 minutes. The cake is done when the top is golden brown and firm to the touch, and a wooden skewer inserted deeply in the center comes out clean.

7. Remove the cake from the oven and let stand on a cooling rack for 10 minutes. Invert the pan onto the rack and carefully lift it off. As the cake is cooling, prepare the vanilla glaze. While the cake is still warm, place a piece of parchment or wax paper under the rack and spoon the glaze onto the cake. The glaze will harden as the cake cools.

STORAGE: Store under a glass cake dome or tightly covered with aluminum foil for up to 7 days. This cake may be frozen before glazing.

VANILLA GLAZE:

Makes enough for one 10-inch round or 9 x 13 x 2-inch coffee cake, or 16 to 18 pastries.

This simple glaze is the one you will use the most throughout this book to finish your pastries. From pound cakes to cinnamon buns to Danish, it is literally the icing on the cake. Do not make this glaze ahead of time because it thickens as it stands and develops a crust. The amount of liquid varies in each recipe depending on how thick you like your glaze. Be sure to have your water very hot.

1 cup strained powdered sugar
3 to 4 teaspoons very hot water
2 teaspoons light corn syrup
1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon lemon juice
2 pinches of salt

Place the powdered sugar in a medium bowl. Add 3 teaspoons of the hot water, the corn syrup, vanilla, lemon juice, and salt. Stir until smooth. Add 1 additional teaspoon hot water or more as needed to make a thin glaze. Using a small whisk, fork, or tip of a teaspoon, drizzle the glaze over the pastry by moving the utensil rapidly back and forth to create a light coating.