

It is thought that the first people to make banana bread were the ancient Greeks and Egyptians. In modern times, the cake like bread became popular in the USA in the 1930s with resurgence, thirty years later. It's also popular in Australia, where they even eat it for breakfast and it is a traditional snack in Hawaii. This confection is easy to make and bakes quickly as the leavening agent is baking soda rather than yeast and no kneading is required.

The bread is normally shaped to fit a rectangular loaf tin and the standard recipe takes around an hour at 350 degrees. It's not suited to storing at room temperature but it can be frozen for long periods. It can be made in a breadmaker, making it very convenient. The basic banana bread ingredients are three mashed, ripe bananas, flour, baking soda, salt, baking powder, butter or shortening, yogurt or buttermilk, sugar and an egg. Vegans too can enjoy the bread as the egg can be replaced with soy yogurt or tofu.

The Vietnamese have their own version of banana bread, called Banh Chuoi, which means banana cake. In addition to bananas, egg and butter, the ingredients call for sugar, white bread, coconut milk, condensed milk and vanilla extract.

There are various versions of the bread, using different spices and flavorings to blend with the banana taste. The recipe for Caribbean Banana Bread adds raisins, pecan halves and grated nutmeg. Banana Nut Bread uses chopped walnuts and Moist Banana Bread contains an extra banana and melted butter or margarine. For people watching the calories, it's possible to make a low fat version with non-fat milk.

Other variations on the basic recipe for banana bread include sour cream and vanilla, chocolate chips with maraschino cherries and nuts, peanut butter, oat bran and applesauce. Whole Wheat Banana Bread uses whole wheat flour, walnuts and slightly over ripe bananas. In addition to bread, bananas are very tasty in muffins and waffles.

Everyone has their own ideas on the perfect way to eat banana bread. Some people like to slice it and pop it in a toaster, whilst others like to cook a French Toast version with maple syrup and cinnamon. It's all a question of personal taste, whether to butter the slices or not. Even bourbon is sometimes added to the mixture. However, it is prepared, it's a great way of using those leftover bananas at the end of the week.