



What do you do with overripe bananas? I like to bake banana bread. This easy recipe makes a moist banana bread that stays fresh for several days. I like to make it on Sundays, so I can have it for breakfast during the week, or as an after-school snack. Unfortunately, my sisters often devour it right away. I like to use a combination of whole wheat and all-purpose flours, but if you only have all-purpose flour that is fine. Usually, I add chocolate chips to the bread, but it's also great plain or with dried cranberries and/or walnuts.

ULTIMATE BANANA BREAD

PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES × COOKING TIME: 50 TO 75 MINUTES × MAKES 1 (9-INCH / 23 CM) LOAF / SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

- ½ CUP (115 g) salted butter (1 stick), at room temperature
- ¾ CUP (150 g) sugar
- 3 to 4 very ripe bananas, peeled (approximately 1¾ cups / 525 g)
- 2 large eggs
- 1½ TEASPOONS vanilla extract
- 2 CUPS (260 g) all-purpose flour (a combination of 1½ cups / 195 g all-purpose flour and ½ cup / 65 g whole wheat flour can also be used)
- 1 TEASPOON baking soda
- ½ TEASPOON baking powder
- ½ CUP (120 ml) plain whole milk yogurt (nonfat, low-fat, or vanilla yogurt can also be used)
- 1 TABLESPOON canola or vegetable oil
- 1 CUP (175 g) chocolate chips (optional)
- ½ CUP (95 g) dried cranberries (optional)
- ¼ CUP (90 g) chopped walnuts (optional)

NOTE: The banana bread is best eaten as soon as it is cool, but it also keeps well. Wrap the bread in foil and keep at room temperature for up to 3 days or refrigerate for about a week. Banana bread can also be well wrapped and frozen for up to 3 months.

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter the bottom and sides of a 9-inch (23 cm) loaf pan. Lightly dust the pan with flour, tapping out any excess.
- 2 In a large bowl, beat the butter with a large spoon until soft and creamy. Slowly add the sugar and continue beating until light and fluffy with a smooth and uniform texture, 1 to 2 minutes.
- 3 In a small bowl, mash the bananas with a fork until smooth but still chunky. Add the mashed bananas to the butter mixture and stir until well combined.
- 4 Add the eggs, 1 at a time, and mix well. Add the vanilla extract and mix thoroughly.
- 5 In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and baking powder. Make sure the dry ingredients are thoroughly mixed together. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ones, and stir with a large spoon until just combined. Do not overmix.
- 6 Add the yogurt and oil and stir until just blended. Again, do not overmix.
- 7 Fold in the chocolate chips, dried cranberries, and/or chopped walnuts, if using.
- 8 Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan. Bake until the top is golden brown and a toothpick or skewer inserted in the crack that forms at the top comes out clean, 50 to 75 minutes. (If the top is browning too quickly, tent the pan with aluminum foil.) Start checking the bread at 50 minutes. It may bake an extra 5 to 25 minutes longer, depending on how many bananas you use.
- 9 Remove the bread from the oven and let cool in the pan set on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully remove the bread from the pan, place it directly on the wire rack, and let cool for 1 hour before slicing.



There are two types of mac and cheese: stovetop and baked. I prefer this stovetop recipe, which starts with a flour and butter mixture called a roux and then uses milk to create a creamy béchamel sauce. I use cheddar cheese, which I think has the perfect mixture of creaminess, tanginess, and saltiness. You can also use Gruyère or another aged, sharp cheese that melts well or even a combination of cheeses. This mac and cheese is rich and creamy, but I could still eat it every day!

CREAMIEST MAC AND CHEESE

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES × COOKING TIME: 25 MINUTES × SERVES 4 TO 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 **POUND** (454 g) pasta (rotelle, penne, farfalle, cavatappi, orecchiette, or elbows)
- 4 **TABLESPOONS** (55 g) salted butter (½ stick)
- ¼ **CUP** (33 g) all-purpose flour
- 2 **CUPS** (480 ml) whole milk (low-fat or nonfat milk can also be used), at room temperature
- 14 **OUNCES** (400 g) grated sharp cheddar cheese (approximately 4⅔ cups)
- ½ **TEASPOON** salt (or to taste)
- ¼ **TEASPOON** ground black pepper
- Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (optional)
- Pinch of chili flakes (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Fill a large pot with water and a large pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions until al dente, about 8 to 10 minutes.
- 2 While the pasta is boiling, make the béchamel sauce: In a 3-quart (2.8 l) heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat, melt the butter. Add the flour while whisking constantly and cook until a smooth paste forms, about 2 minutes—this is the roux.
- 3 Continue whisking and slowly add the milk, 1 tablespoon at a time. When you have added 6 tablespoons (90 ml) of milk, the sauce should start to be smooth with a batter-like consistency. Continue to slowly whisk in the remaining milk. This takes about 8 to 10 minutes total.
- 4 Increase the heat to medium and continue whisking until the sauce comes to a boil and starts to thicken, about 3 minutes. After the sauce thickens, reduce the heat back to low and add the cheddar cheese, whisking constantly to make sure there are no lumps.
- 5 Drain the pasta and reserve ¼ cup (60 ml) of the pasta water.
- 6 Add the cooked pasta to the béchamel sauce and stir with large spoon until the pasta is completely coated in sauce. Continue cooking over low heat for 2 to 3 minutes. If the sauce gets too thick, add a little pasta water as needed. Add the salt, to taste, and the pepper. Mix in the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and chili flakes, if using, and serve.

NOTE: If you have any leftovers, you can store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days and reheat in a pan over low heat, adding a few tablespoons of milk and stirring gently but constantly until heated through.

Who doesn't love pizza? Our family has always had one favorite dinner ritual—Sunday night pizza. We used to order pizza, but then realized it's even more delicious and so much fun to make it at home where everyone can customize an individual pie with different toppings. I've experimented with a lot of pizza dough recipes, and what I love about this pizza dough is that it can be ready within an hour, but still has a great taste and is easy to handle. As for toppings, you can add just about anything you want to your pizza. Sliced pepperoni, browned Italian sausage, diced onions, garlic, and sliced bell peppers all work well. I'm a pizza purist and love a classic margherita pie, but I also love pesto pizza. Yum!

PERFECT PIZZA

PREP TIME FOR PIZZA DOUGH: 15 MINUTES × **RISING TIME FOR DOUGH: 45 MINUTES** × **PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES PER PIZZA** × **COOKING TIME: 3 TO 5 MINUTES PER PIZZA** × **MAKES 6 (8- TO 10-INCH / 20 TO 25 CM) PIZZAS**

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DOUGH

- 2 (¼-ounce / 7 g) packages active-dry yeast
- 1½ CUPS plus 2 tablespoons (385 ml) warm water
- 4 CUPS (520 g) all-purpose flour
- 3 TABLESPOONS extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 TABLESPOON coarse sea or kosher salt
- 2 TEASPOONS sugar
- 2 TABLESPOONS cornmeal for dusting (optional)

FOR THE TOPPINGS

- ¾ to 1¼ CUPS (180 to 295 ml) Tomato Sauce or Pesto (pages 30–31)
- 15 OUNCES (425 g) mozzarella cheese, preferably fresh
- 2 TABLESPOONS (30 ml) extra-virgin olive oil
- Coarse sea salt or kosher salt to taste
- 1½ cups (85 g) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (optional)
- Fresh basil leaves, for serving (optional)

DIRECTIONS

MAKE THE DOUGH

- 1 In a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook attachment, or in a large bowl, combine the yeast and warm water then add the flour, olive oil, salt, and sugar.
- 2 Using the dough hook, mix the ingredients on low for 2 minutes. Increase the speed to medium and knead until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 1 to 2 minutes. Form the dough into a ball. You can also knead the dough by hand; see step 5 in the recipe for Back to Basics Bread (page 45) for kneading instructions.
- 3 Put the dough in a clean medium bowl that's been lightly oiled with vegetable or canola oil. Cover the bowl with a clean, damp tea towel (or plastic wrap). This prevents the dough from getting a hard crust while it rises. Let the dough rise at room temperature for 30 minutes.
- 4 Divide the dough into six equal portions and shape each portion into a round ball. Place the balls of dough on a lightly floured work surface, cover with the damp tea towel, and let sit for 15 minutes.

MAKE THE PIZZA

- 1 Preheat the oven to its highest setting, usually 550°F (285°C). Place a pizza stone or baking sheet on the middle rack of the oven and let it heat up for 5 minutes.
- 2 Dust a pizza peel or large cutting board with cornmeal or flour. Using your fingers and knuckles, gently stretch a ball of dough into an 8- to 10-inch (20 to 25 cm) circle and place on the prepared pizza peel.
- 3 Spread 2 to 3 tablespoons of tomato sauce or pesto evenly on the dough using the back of a spoon. Tear 2 ½ ounces (70 grams) of mozzarella into small (roughly 1-inch / 2.5 cm) pieces and scatter over the tomato sauce. Add toppings, if desired. Drizzle with 1 teaspoon (5 ml) of olive oil and sprinkle with a pinch of salt to taste.
- 4 With the help of an adult, slide the dough onto the pizza stone in the oven. Bake until the crust is lightly brown and the cheese is bubbling, 3 to 5 minutes.
- 5 Remove the pizza from the oven and cool for 1 minute. Top with Parmigiano-Reggiano and basil, if using, and serve whole or cut into quarters.





I have been adjusting, tweaking, and experimenting with this recipe for a few years in order to come up with the perfect chocolate chip cookie—one that has great flavor and is chewy (or bendy, as we say in my family) and not too thick or too thin. I like to use 60% cacao chocolate chips because dark chocolate is delicious in cookies. I prefer chips slightly larger, but any chocolate chips will work. It is fun and easy to make this recipe by hand, but you can use an electric or stand mixer, if you prefer. Although everyone in my family likes a different style of chocolate chip cookie, we can all agree that these are delicious!

CHEWY CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES × COOKING TIME: 12 TO 15 MINUTES PER BATCH × MAKES 36 (3-INCH / 7.5 CM) COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 CUP (2 sticks / 226 g) salted butter, at room temperature
- ½ CUP (100 g) granulated sugar
- 1¼ CUPS (275 g) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 TEASPOONS pure vanilla extract
- 2 CUPS (260 g) all-purpose flour
- ½ TEASPOON baking powder
- ½ TEASPOON baking soda
- ¼ TEASPOON salt, preferably kosher salt
- 1⅓ to 2 CUPS (10 to 12 ounces / 285 to 340 g) bittersweet chocolate chips

NOTE: The cookies are best enjoyed as soon as they are cool, the day they are made, but can be stored in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 325°F (160°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.
- 2 In a large bowl, beat the butter with a large spoon until soft and creamy. Slowly add the granulated and light brown sugars and continue beating until light and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes.
- 3 Add the eggs to the butter mixture and beat for about 1 minute. Add the vanilla and beat until smooth, about 30 seconds.
- 4 In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Make sure the dry ingredients are thoroughly mixed together.
- 5 Gradually add the flour mixture to the dough, stirring just until the dough comes together, about 1 minute. (You can also use a stand mixer on medium speed just until the ingredients are well combined, about 30 seconds.) Do not overmix. Fold the chocolate chips into the dough with a spatula or large spoon.
- 6 Transfer the dough to an airtight container, or cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for about 30 minutes. (The dough can be refrigerated overnight or up to 1 week.)
- 7 Roll the dough into heaping 1-tablespoon mounds and arrange in 3 rows of 4 on the prepared baking sheet. The cookies will spread, so leave about 2 inches (5 cm) in between the mounds of dough. Slightly flatten each mound of dough with clean fingers, or the back of a spoon, and make sure the chips are evenly distributed.
- 8 Bake for 7 minutes then rotate the baking sheet and continue baking until the edges of the cookies are slightly brown and the tops are just set, about 5 to 8 more minutes.
- 9 Remove the cookies from the oven and let cool on the baking sheet, set on a wire rack, for about 5 minutes. Using a spatula, place the cookies directly on the wire rack and let cool completely. Repeat with the remaining dough to make more cookies.