

Banana-Nut Upside-Down Cake

If you think you can't make a scratch cake, or cook it in the pressure cooker, wait till you try this. This dessert is a very simple yellow cake with a top layer of caramelized bananas and nuts. This is a fantastic way to use overripe bananas. Not that you can't use the perfect-looking bananas, but wait a few days until they start to get soft and develop a few black speckles, and they'll taste and smell even more banana-like. To cook this PIP recipe, you will need a plain, flat-bottomed, stainless-steel insert pan that will fit within your pressure cooker. Serve this dessert with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream, if desired.

Serves 6

Step One: The Caramel Layer

- 1 cup sugar
- 3 to 4 very ripe bananas
- 2/3 cup chopped nuts, such as walnuts or pecans

Put the sugar in a heavy skillet over medium heat to melt the sugar. Using a wooden spoon, begin stirring when the sugar starts to liquefy. Continue stirring and cook until the caramel becomes amber in color, 10 to 12 minutes. Watch closely, as the caramel can darken and burn very quickly at this stage. Using oven mitts, immediately pour the hot caramel into a stainless-steel insert pan, taking care not to let it splatter.

Quickly tilt and rotate the insert pan, distributing the caramel evenly over the bottom and up the sides of the pan before it sets. Cut the bananas in half, and then cut each half lengthwise. Place the halves close together, cut side down, on top of the caramel in a spoke-like pattern, or any other decorative arrangement you prefer. Distribute the nuts on top of the bananas, using the wooden spoon to press them into the caramel in the gaps between the bananas.

Step Two: The Cake Layer

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¾ cup buttermilk

In a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and baking soda. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture alternately with the buttermilk, mixing just until incorporated. Pour the batter over the bananas. Cover the top of the pan with a doubled sheet

of aluminum foil, crimping it tightly around the rim. Place the cooking rack in the pressure cooker and add 1 cup water. Use foil helper handles to position the insert pan in the pressure cooker. Lock the lid in place. Bring to 15psi over high heat and immediately reduce the heat to the lowest possible setting to stabilize and maintain that pressure. Cook for 12 minutes. Remove from the heat and use the natural release method before opening the lid. Test for doneness: A toothpick inserted into the center of the cake should come out clean. If needed, return to pressure for an additional 3 minutes and again use the natural release method. Transfer the insert pan to a wire cooling rack and run a thin knife blade around the sides of the pan to loosen the cake. Unmold the cake while it's still warm. Choose a deep, rimmed serving plate (a pie plate is good) to catch any melted caramel sauce; place it over the insert pan and quickly flip the setup over. Carefully remove the insert pan. Serve warm.

Variation:

PEACH UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Substitute 3 ripe peaches or nectarines for the bananas. Peel and slice the peaches into a bowl. Taste, and if the peaches are too tart add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (or an amount to your taste) light brown sugar. Arrange the peach slices in a decorative spiral pattern on top on the caramel. Omit the nuts if desired. Proceed with the recipe, but cook for 15 minutes rather than 12.

Variation:

PLUM UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Substitute 6 or 7 ripe plums for the bananas. Peel the plums, cut them in half, and remove the pits. Arrange the plum halves cut side down on the caramel in the insert pan in a decorative pattern. Omit the nuts if desired. Proceed with the recipe, but cook for 15 minutes rather than 12.