

Recipe for Exceptional Almond-Scented Chocolate Chip Banana Bread

I use finely ground almond meal (available at Trader Joe's), which gives the bread a wonderfully moist texture but is almost undetectable. I can guarantee, from parental experience, that even people who don't fancy any crunch in their baked goods will wolf this down and plead for more.

2/3 cup *each* all-purpose flour, white whole wheat flour, and almond meal
3/4 cup light brown sugar
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 very ripe bananas, shmooshed into oblivion
2 tablespoons *each* plain yogurt and sour cream (or 1/4 cup of either one)
2 eggs, at room temperature, lightly beaten
3/4 stick butter, melted and cooled slightly
1/2 teaspoon *each* almond extract and vanilla extract
1/2 cup mini chocolate chips

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Coat a loaf pan with nonstick spray and dust it with flour. Tap out the excess.

In a large bowl, whisk together both flours, almond meal, brown sugar, baking soda, and salt. In a medium bowl, stir together the shmooshed bananas, yogurt, sour cream, eggs, butter, and both extracts. Pour the wet ingredients over the dry. Toss in the mini chocolate chips.

Use a rubber spatula to fold the lot together just until everything is evenly moistened but no further. Bake for 55 minutes precisely, or until a tester emerges unmarred. The loaf will be deep brown. Cool completely before even thinking of unmolding onto a wire rack.

N.B. Do not be tempted to remove the banana bread from the oven prematurely, or you'll be sorry. In my pre-professional-banana-bread-making days, many of my loaves sported a strip of raw batter through their central axis. Patience is a virtue.