



1938 BANANA CAKE

Source: *America's Cook Book*, The Home Institute of the New York Herald Tribune, 1938

Yield: 3 (8-inch) layers or 2 (10-inch) layers

Recipe Description

A tender 1930s Depression-era banana cake made with mashed bananas, real butter, and old-fashioned “sour milk.” Light, moist, and subtly fragrant with vanilla and lemon extract, this vintage cake was traditionally baked in layers and finished with a fluffy Sea Foam Frosting. But it also bakes beautifully in a tube pan — rising tall with a golden crust — and needs nothing more than a delicate dusting of powdered sugar. A nostalgic, unfussy bake perfect for breakfast, tea, or a simple afternoon sweetness.



Ingredients

Dry Ingredients

- 2 cups sifted cake flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

Wet Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup mashed bananas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour milk or buttermilk



Directions

1. Prepare the dry ingredients

Sift together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.

2. Cream the shortening

Cream shortening until soft and smooth. Gradually add sugar, beating until very fluffy.

3. Add flavorings and eggs

Beat in vanilla, lemon extract, and the beaten eggs until well combined. Stir in mashed bananas.

4. Alternate wet and dry additions

Add the sifted dry ingredients alternately with the sour milk or buttermilk, beating until smooth after each addition.

5. Bake

Pour batter into greased layer pans.

Bake at 350°F for about 1/2 hour, or until the cake tests done in the center.

6. Optional Frosting

Frost with **Sea Foam Frosting** (as suggested in the original text), or enjoy plain with a dusting of powdered sugar.

Notes

- “Sour milk” in 1930s recipes can be recreated by adding **1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice** to 1 cup milk and letting it stand 5 minutes.
- This cake is exceptionally moist and keeps beautifully overnight — a common trait of Depression-era fruit cakes.
- Wonderful served warm with butter, or at room temperature with tea or coffee.
- For a true vintage finish, bake as two or three layers and frost between with a light, glossy meringue frosting.