

Hummingbird Cake

By Vallery Lomas

YIELD 12 servings

TIME 1 hour

This super-simple tropical cake contains a hefty amount of mashed bananas and crushed pineapple. Often associated with the American South, where it is believed to have adopted a cream cheese frosting, it most likely originated in Jamaica, where it was called a Doctor Bird Cake. (“Doctor bird” is the nickname of Jamaica’s national bird, the red-billed streamertail hummingbird.) Some say this cake is sweet enough to attract even hummingbirds, while others say the name derives from how bananas, a key ingredient in the cake, resemble the bird’s beak. The end result tastes similar to banana bread, but with the moistness and flavor of a spice-filled carrot cake.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CAKE:

Nonstick baking spray

3 ¾ cups/480 grams all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon kosher salt

3 large eggs, at room temperature

1 ½ cups/340 grams overripe mashed bananas (about 3 bananas)

1 packed cup/220 grams dark brown sugar

1 cup/200 grams granulated sugar

1 cup/240 milliliters vegetable oil

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 (8-ounce/227-gram) cans crushed pineapple in juice (about 1 ¾ cups)

¾ cup/85 grams chopped toasted pecan halves

FOR THE FROSTING:

2 (8-ounce/226-gram) packages cream cheese, at room temperature

1 cup/225 grams unsalted butter (2 sticks), at room temperature

7 ½ cups/905 grams confectioners’ sugar

4 teaspoons vanilla extract

Heaping ¾ cup/85 grams toasted pecan halves, for garnish

Dried pineapple rings and edible flowers, for garnish

PREPARATION

Step 1

Prepare the cake: Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease three (9-inch) cake pans with nonstick baking spray. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking soda and salt. In a second large bowl, whisk together the eggs, mashed bananas, sugars, oil and vanilla.

Step 2

Make a well in the dry ingredients and add the wet ingredients to the center of the well. Gently fold using a rubber spatula to combine. Add the pineapple and pecans, and fold again until just incorporated.

Step 3

Divide the batter evenly among the cake pans. Bake until golden, cooked through and an inserted toothpick comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Move the cakes to a wire baking rack to cool in the pans for 10 minutes. Then, remove from the pans and allow to cool completely on the wire racks

Step 4

As cakes cool, make the cream cheese frosting: In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, add the cream cheese, butter, confectioners’ sugar and vanilla. Mix on low speed until all the ingredients just come together. Then, increase the speed to medium and mix until creamy and smooth, about 5 minutes.

Step 5

Assemble the cake: Place the first layer of the cake top-side down onto a cake stand or plate. Spread the top with cream cheese frosting. Repeat with the second two layers, always placing the top side down to create a very flat surface. Frost the top and sides of the cake.

Step 6

Place whole toasted pecan halves around the rim of the cake. Garnish with the dried pineapple and edible flowers, as desired. Slice and serve.

PRIVATE NOTES

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