

Gift of the Magi Bread

from Urban Sacred Garden



A few Growing up, one of my Mom's holiday traditions was baking Gift of the Magi Bread. Usually, we made this bread at Christmas, but really it is a great treat (and gift to others) any time of the year. I've listed the traditional ingredients we use below, but you can get as creative as you'd like with the nuts and fruits you add to the mix. Even though this is fruity, it is way better than a fruitcake (IMHO)! So, get to baking and enjoy!

INGREDIENTS

1 Stick (1/2 Cup) Butter, softened (put in microwave for about 20-30 seconds to soften quickly if needed but do not melt)
1 Cup Granulated White Sugar
2 Eggs
1 Tbsp Vanilla
2 Cups All-Purpose Flour, sifted
1 Tsp Baking Soda, sifted
Pinch Salt

1 Cup (2-3) Very Ripe Bananas, mashed
1 - 11 oz. Can Mandarin Oranges, drained
6 oz. Chocolate Pieces of choice (I like Bittersweet)
1 Cup Shredded Coconut
2/3 Cup Sliced Almonds + extra to top bread
½ Cup Maraschino Cherries, chopped
½ Cup Dried Figs or Dates, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter or grease two 9x5 loaf pans or four small loaf pans.
2. Cream together softened Butter and Sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer. Add Eggs and Vanilla and beat until fluffy.
3. In a medium bowl sift together Flour, Baking Soda and Salt. Add Flour mixture alternately with Bananas to Butter mixture, one scoop at a time, mixing to combine between each addition.
4. Use a wooden spoon to stir in Mandarin Oranges, Chocolate, Coconut, Almonds, Cherries and Figs.
5. Divide equally and pour into buttered pans. Use the back of the spoon to smooth the top.
6. Sprinkle extra Almonds over the top of each loaf. Place pans in the pre-heated oven to bake.
7. For large pans, bake for 45 minutes to an hour, until toothpick from center comes out mostly clean. For small pans, bake for about 25-35 minutes.
8. Remove loaf pans from oven. Let bread cool for about 10 minutes. Slightly loosen loaf from sides of pan with a butter knife, remove from pan and place on wire rack to cool. (If you don't have a wire rack you can also use a cutting board, but be sure to roll it on its sides occasionally so the bottom doesn't stay too moist.)
9. Serve warm (or cooled). This bread is excellent reheated in the toaster, with a little fresh butter. Enjoy!