

Pumpkin-Seeded Banana Bread

In the world of zucchini breads, Renee Erickson's rules all. This banana bread, made by adapting the zucchini bread from *The Whale Wins* that appears in *A Boat, a Whale, and a Walrus*, has the same sweet, spiced background that makes the zucchini bread so addictive—plus a crunchy layer of shelled pumpkin seeds that, for me, act as a harbinger of deep fall. Note that at *The Whale Wins*, the zucchini bread is pan-roasted in butter and served with crème fraîche and sea salt. That's not going to hurt this banana bread, either.

Use a good extra-virgin olive oil for this recipe; you'll taste it in the final product.

Active time: 30 minutes

Makes one 9- by 5-inch loaf

Unsalted butter, for greasing the pan
2 cups (about 256 grams) bread flour, plus more for dusting the pan
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
3 very ripe bananas
3 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons demerara sugar
1/2 cup shelled pumpkin seeds

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter and flour a 9- by 5-inch loaf pan, and set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, ginger, baking powder, baking soda, nutmeg, and salt, and set aside.

In another bowl, mash the bananas with a large fork until only pea-sized pieces of fruit remain. Whisk in the eggs and the vanilla. Add the olive oil in three stages, whisking it in until completely incorporated each time.

Gently fold the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir until no white spots remain. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and sprinkle the top evenly first with the demerara sugar, then with the pumpkin seeds. Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 70 to 80 minutes, or until a skewer inserted between seeds in the center of the loaf comes out clean. (It should rise right to the top of the pan.)

Cool the bread in the pan for 15 minutes, then turn it out onto a cooling rack and let cool completely before cutting into fat slabs.