

Quick Breads Rise To Occasion With Full Flavor

BY SHARON K. GHAG
© 2012 The Modesto Bee

The idea came together in a flash. Someone mentioned quick breads, and everybody jumped on the bandwagon.

That's the beauty of quick breads: Mix, bake, take, share. They are sweet or savory, studded with fruits or nuts, and full of flavor and endless possibilities. Our gathering featured four sweet and two savory loaves.

Quick breads are in the same family as muffins and scones and rely on baking powder and baking soda for rising. The chemicals in the soda or powder react with acids to produce carbon dioxide, the gas that gives baked goods their lift. Baking powder and soda are not interchangeable, though, because baking powder is baking soda mixed with cornstarch and a dry acid.

If you find yourself without baking powder, "The America's Test Kitchen Quick Family Cookbook" offers this recipe for a "passable substitution": Replace each teaspoon of baking powder with 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar and 1/4 teaspoon baking soda.

For best results with these recipes, use baking powder and baking soda before their "best by" dates. If baking powder is nearing expiration, check to see if it is still active by mixing 2 teaspoons of it in a cup of hot water. If the foaming reaction is weak, toss it.

Here are some more tips for perfect loaves:

- Preheat the oven.
- Prepare the nuts and fruit ahead of time.
- Don't overmix the batter. Too much mixing can result in loaves not properly rising, turning out tough and possibly with tunnels through them.

Tent the loaves with aluminum foil once they begin to brown to prevent overbrowning. Loaves that are too compact are a result of too much flour or too much leavening.

Use a knife — a toothpick is too short — to check for doneness by sticking the blade in the center of the loaf. If the knife blade comes out clean, or with a few crumbs attached, it's done.

Shiny pans reflect heat, but dark pans absorb heat so baked goods brown more quickly. If using dark pans, lower the heat by 25 degrees.

Store loaves for 24 hours before slicing. Or freeze and slice with a serrated-edge knife.

IOZZA'S CORN AND BACON LOAF

Makes 1 loaf
Ingredients:
12 ounces hardwood-smoked bacon, coarsely chopped
1 ear corn, husked
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 1/4 cups whole milk
3 large eggs
2 cups grated sharp white cheddar, divided use
1/3 cup coarsely chopped fresh chives
Salted butter, for serving

Instructions:
Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Cook the bacon in a large heavy saute pan over medium heat for 8 minutes, or until browned and crisp. Transfer bacon to paper towels. Brush loaf with bacon drippings from the pan. Set aside 1/2 cup of bacon drippings to cool.

Slice the corn kernels off the cob. You should have 1 cup.

Whisk the flour, baking powder, salt and cayenne pepper in a large bowl to blend. Whisk the milk, the eggs and reserved bacon drippings in another large bowl. To this stir in the bacon, 11/2 cups cheese, corn and chives. Stir the milk mixture into the flour mixture just until blended. Spoon batter into prepared pan. Sprinkle tops with remaining cheese. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Serve with butter.

If baking these as muffins, bake for 18 minutes.

This recipe is from "Relaxed Cooking With Curtis Stone" (Clarkson Potter, \$32.50).

EARL GREY TEA LOAF

Serves 12
Ingredients:
6 Earl Grey tea bags
14 ounces dried fruit, such as raisins, golden raisins, cherries, cranberries
1 orange
1 large egg
1 1/2 cups sugar, divided use
3 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
Pinch salt
1 teaspoon quality pumpkin pie spice
1 whole nutmeg, for grating
1 lemon
Instructions:
Preheat oven to 350 degrees
Put 4 tea bags in a measuring cup and add 1 1/4 cups boiling water. Leave to brew for a few

minutes, then remove tea bags. Put the dried fruit into a large mixing bowl, grate over the zest of the orange and pour over the hot tea. Cover and leave overnight.

Whisk the egg and add to the bowl of fruit along with 1 cup sugar. Add the flour, baking powder, salt, pumpkin pie spice and a few good gratings of nutmeg, and squeeze in the juice of the orange. Mix until a dough-like consistency (it might seem a bit dry). Spoon the mixture into a 4-cup loaf pan lined with parchment paper and bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until cooked through, or until a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean.

Put the 2 remaining tea bags into a pan with 3/4 cup water and the zest and juice of the lemon. Gently bring to a boil, removing the tea bags after a few minutes. Add the remaining 1/2 cup sugar and bring to a boil without stirring — keep it on a steady medium heat so that you have a steady boil for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the mixture has reduced by half and you have a golden syrup. Pour this into a measuring cup.

As soon as the loaf comes out of the oven, poke little holes in the top and pour the syrup over the loaf. Once the syrup has absorbed, turn loaf onto wire rack and cool.

This recipe is from "Jaime Oliver's Great Britain: 130 of My Favorite British Recipes, From Comfort Food to New Classics" (Hyperion Books, \$35).

WHITE CHOCOLATE CRANBERRY BREAD

Serves 10
Ingredients:
6 ounces white chocolate, finely chopped
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 cup sugar
8 tablespoons (1 stick) salted butter, at room temperature
3 large eggs, at room temperature

1/2 cup buttermilk
Grated zest of 1 orange
1/4 cup fresh orange juice
2 teaspoons pure vanilla
1 cup fresh or frozen whole cranberries, not thawed
1 cup toasted, skinned, coarsely chopped hazelnuts
1 cup white chocolate chips

Instructions:
Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 350 degrees. Lightly butter and flour a 9-by-9-by-3-inch loaf pan and tap out excess flour. Melt and cool the chopped white chocolate.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, salt and baking soda. In a large bowl, beat the sugar and butter with an electric mixer set on high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. One at a time, beat in the eggs, beating well after each addition, and scraping down sides of the bowl as needed.

Beat in the buttermilk, followed by the tepid white chocolate, orange zest and juice, and vanilla. The mixture will look curdled. With the mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture, and beat just until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Stir in the cranberries, hazelnuts and white chocolate chips. Spread batter in prepared pan. Bake until a bamboo skewer inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean, about 11/2 hours. Let cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes before inverting and unmolding bread.

This recipe is from "Tate's Bake Shop Baking for Friends," by Kathleen King (Tate's Bake Shop, \$24.95).

POLENTA LOAF WITH ROSEMARY, PARMESAN & OLIVE OIL

Makes 1 loaf
Ingredients:
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup (5-ounces) polenta
1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated course (1 cup), divided use

3/4 cup sour cream
1/2 cup whole milk
1/2 cup sugar
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 large eggs
Instructions:
Heat oven to 400 degrees. Whisk flour, polenta, rosemary, baking powder, baking soda and salt together in a large bowl. Stir in 1/2 cup Parmesan, breaking up any clumps, until coated with flour.

In a separate bowl, whisk sour cream, milk, sugar, oil and eggs together until smooth. Gently fold sour cream mixture into flour mixture until just combined; do not overmix.

Pour into greased loaf pan or greased muffin tins. Sprinkle with

remaining Parmesan.

Bake until golden brown and a knife inserted in the center comes out clean, 15 to 20 minutes for muffins, 40 to 50 minutes for loaf pan. Cool before inverting.

Note: Cornmeal can be used in place of the polenta. It will result in a more cake-like texture.

This recipe is from "The America's Test Kitchen Quick Family Cookbook," by editors at America's Test Kitchen (\$34.95).

GOLDEN PUMPKIN LOAF

Makes 1 large loaf
Ingredients:
2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup yellow cornmeal
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg or mace
3 large eggs
1 1/4 cups dark brown sugar, packed
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups pumpkin puree
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
6 tablespoons canola oil
1 cup dried cranberries
1 cup chopped walnuts

Instructions:
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan, and line bottom and long sides with parchment paper.

Mix together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda, salt and spices in a medium bowl. In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the eggs and both sugars on medium-high speed until creamy and thick, for about 3 minutes. Reduce the speed, then add the pumpkin, vanilla and oil and continue mixing until smooth.

On low speed, slowly add the dry ingredients a little at a time, mixing only until the flour just disappears. Remove the bowl from the mixer. Scrape the bowl up from the bottom and fold in the cranberries and walnuts. Transfer to prepared pans. Bake for 60 to 70 minutes, or until loaf is well browned and a knife inserted emerges clean from the center. Cool in pan for 15 minutes before turning out.

This recipe is from "Piece of Cake: Home Baking Made Simple," by David Muniz and David Lesniak (Rizzoli, \$29.95).

PRALINE-APPLE BREAD

Makes 1 loaf
Ingredients:
11/2 cups chopped pecans
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
11/2 cups finely chopped, peeled Granny Smith apples (3/4 pound)
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar

Instructions:
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake 1/2 cup pecans in a single layer in a shallow pan for 6 to 8 minutes, or until toasted and fragrant, stirring after 4 minutes.

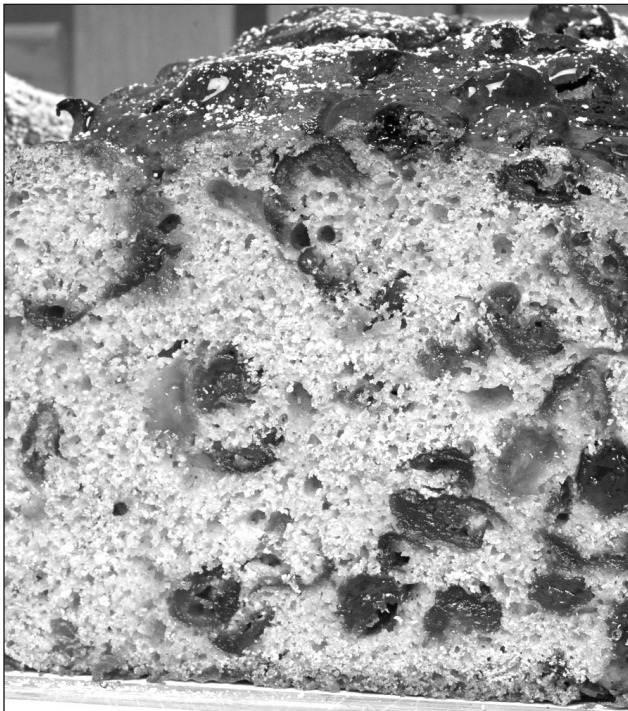
Beat sour cream and the next three ingredients on low speed with an electric mixer for 2 minutes until blended. Stir together the flour and next three ingredients. Add to sour cream mixture, beating just until blended. Stir in apple and 1/2 cup toasted pecans. Spoon batter into a greased 9-by-5-inch loaf pan. Sprinkle with remaining pecans. Lightly press pecans into batter.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour to 1 hour and 5 minutes, or until a wooden pick inserted into center comes out clean, shielding with aluminum foil after 50 minutes to prevent excessive browning. Cool in pan for 10 minutes.

Remove from pan to wire rack.

Bring butter and brown sugar to a boil in a 1-quart heavy saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly; boil 1 minute. Remove from heat, and spoon over top of bread.

This recipe is from "Southern Living Home Cooking Basics: Great Food Made Simple" (Oxmoor House, \$29.95).



JOAN BARNETT LEE/MODESTO BEE/MCT
Quick breads are just what the name implies, mix, bake, take and share relying on baking soda or baking powder for rise instead of waiting for yeast. They can be sweet, full of nuts and fruit, or savory

Guess who turns 60
on October 22!!!!
MERLE TRAMP!!!
Happy
Birthday Dad!!!
from
Bandit & your other kids

JAM AT THE UFW
in Yankton
Sun, Oct 21st • 3pm - ?
ALL MUSICIANS & FANS WELCOME!!
Keyboard, and sound
system furnished.
Lunch Available
**Handicap Access -
open to the public
free admission**

**SOUTH DAKOTA
Hall of Fame
COUNTRY MUSIC**

www.southdakotacountrymusichalloffame.org
VFW post 791 • 209 Cedar St. • Yankton • 665-3562