

DATE-SWEETENED BANANA BREAD

MAKES ONE 9X5 LOAF

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- 1 cup dried dates, pitted (about 8 ounces)*
- ½ cup of hot water*
- 4 Tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature*
- 2 large eggs*
- 2 cups white whole wheat flour (or 1 c. all purpose flour + 1 c. whole wheat flour)*
- 1 teaspoon aluminum-free baking soda*
- ½ teaspoon fine grain sea salt*
- 1 Tablespoon pure vanilla extract*
- 3 large **ripe** bananas, peeled and mashed (about 1 cup)**
- ½ cup chopped raw walnuts (optional)***

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1. Place the dates in the bowl of a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Add the hot water and allow to soak while you prepare everything else. Allow to soak for at least 10 minutes.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease the bottom and sides of a 9x5-inch loaf pan. Line with parchment paper, if desired.
3. With the mixer on medium speed, blend the dates and water until a smooth paste forms. Add the softened butter and beat until creamy. Add the eggs one at a time until well blended.
4. In a medium bowl mix together the flour, baking soda and sea salt. Add to the wet mixture and combine until just blended. Fold in the mashed bananas, vanilla extract and walnuts.
5. Pour into the prepared pan and bake for 50-60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan 10 minutes and then remove the bread and transfer onto a rack.

*Do not attempt this with bananas that are unripe. They are neither sweet enough nor soft enough.

**Substitutions: pecans, chocolate chips, fresh blueberries, fresh cranberries, unsweetened coconut