

Inspired by my first breakfast in Australia and it couldn't have been a better start. Fresh off the plane, I felt like I was home in a place I'd never been. French toast, fresh banana, maple syrup, peanut butter parfait, some sort of banana spring roll and cookie crumble all topped with Persian Fairy Floss, bliss. The waitress routinely asked "would you like to add bacon?" Of course the answer to this is always 'yes'.

EPIC BANANA



INGREDIENTS

CAKE:

125g baking spread
150g light brown soft sugar, sifted
2 large eggs
225g self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
2 very ripe bananas (approx. 200g when peeled)
2 tbsp milk

BACON TOPPING:

1 rasher unsmoked back bacon
1 tbsp maple syrup

FROSTING:

60g peanut butter (smooth or crunchy)
40g soft butter
40g icing sugar

BANANA TOPPING:

1 under-ripe, banana
Small knob of butter
2 tbsp maple syrup

COOKIE TOPPING:

1-2 chocolate chip cookies

METHOD

Grease and line a 900g loaf tin with non-stick baking paper and preheat the oven to 180c/160 fan/gas mark 4.

First make the cake. Mash the bananas and set aside. Put all of the other cake ingredients into a large bowl and whisk until they're thoroughly, but just, combined and light and airy – do not over mix. Stir in the mashed banana until it is evenly dispersed. Put the mixture into the lined tin and roughly level off. Bake for 55-65 minutes. It should have risen, be golden brown and a skewer inserted into the centre should come out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for about 15 minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.

While the cake is in the oven, prepare the bacon topping. Trim any fat off the bacon, chop it into very small pieces and cook in a small non-stick frying pan until turning brown – I tend not to use any extra fat for this but you could if you wanted. Stir in the maple syrup to coat all pieces and cook for another 1-2 minutes until the syrup has nearly disappeared. It will bubble lots and turn very golden – don't worry at all if it looks like you have little burnt bits, these will add to the flavour. Grease and line a small tray with non-stick baking paper and arrange the bacon pieces in a single layer, leaving any excess syrup/liquid behind.

When the cake comes out of the oven turn the temperature down to 150c/130 fan/gas mark 2. Put the bacon into the oven and cook for 18-20 minutes until it's a very deep red/brown, almost black, colour. Set aside to cool completely.

Make the frosting. Using an electric whisk, beat together the peanut butter, butter, icing sugar and a good pinch of salt until thoroughly combined and light and fluffy – this will take about 5 minutes.

Make the banana topping. Slice the banana into ½cm pieces on the diagonal. Fry them in the butter over a high heat for about 1 minute on each side until they are turning golden. Stir in the maple syrup to coat – it will bubble rapidly and nearly all evaporate very quickly. Turn off the heat and set aside to cool.

Break up the cookies into small chunks.

Once the cake is cool, spread the frosting all over the top then put the maple caramelised bananas in a line down the middle. Sprinkle the bacon pieces and cookie crumble either side. If you don't plan to eat the cake the same day, wait to prepare the banana pieces until just before serving.

The cake, frosting and bacon will keep well for 3 days at room temperature. After 1 day the banana topping will start to brown and the cookie crumble will soften, but they will still taste great.