

Sweet Potato Bread

by Alexis Lawson

as featured in *Home Economics*

This recipe is a decadent, sweet, fragrant treat. It's as rich as a cake and can be served for any time of day. Prepared as written, it produces one loaf that serves 6-8 people.

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Ingredients

Bread

- 2 large sweet potatoes
- 1 C salted sweet cream butter, divided
- 1 tsp salt
- Spices
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground cinnamon
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground nutmeg
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground cardamom
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp pumpkin pie spice
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground allspice
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground ginger
- 2 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C neutral oil, such as vegetable or canola oil
- 1 C granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C brown sugar
- 3 large eggs

- 1 ³/₄ C all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract

Glaze

- ¹/₄ C butter
- Spices
 - ¹/₄ tsp ground cinnamon
 - ¹/₄ tsp ground nutmeg
 - ¹/₄ tsp ground cardamom
 - ¹/₄ tsp ground allspice
 - ¹/₄ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- ¹/₄ C brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup

Supplies

- Large pot
 - Small saucepan
 - Loaf pan
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Instructions

Prep

- Preheat the oven to 350°F / 177°C
- Grease and flour a loaf pan (see recipe notes for pan alternatives)
- Wash the sweet potatoes thoroughly

Step One

Cook the sweet potatoes. Fill a large pot with water. Add the sweet potatoes and bring to a high boil; boil the sweet potatoes until fork-tender, about 18-20 minutes. [*ed. note: adding a pinch of salt to the water while boiling will lead to a more intense sweet potato flavor*].

Drain the water and remove the cooked sweet potatoes from the pot. Once they're cool enough to handle, peel and chop into large chunks.

Step Two

Mash and season the sweet potatoes. Return the cooking pot to medium heat. Add ½ C butter to the pot and allow it to melt over the heat. Once melted, add spices, maple syrup, brown sugar, and vanilla extract. Return the cooked sweet potato chunks to the pot and mash thoroughly. Mix well, then add another ½ C butter and a splash of water to the pot; without mixing, cover the pot and reduce to lowest heat.

Step Three

Combine wet and dry ingredients separately.

- Combine flour, salt, baking soda, and baking powder. Add additional cinnamon and nutmeg if desired.
- Combine granulated sugar, and oil. Mix well, then add eggs and mix until smoothly incorporated.

Step Four

Mix the batter. Combine wet and dry ingredients. Mix to form a sticky dough; then fold in sweet potato mixture to combine. The end result will be a glossy batter.

Step Five

Bake. Pour the dough into your prepared loaf pan, filling the pan about halfway. *[Ed. note: If you have more batter than your loaf pan can hold at this capacity, consider using the overflow to make a second, smaller loaf, or muffins.]* Bake for 35 minutes, or until a testing stick inserted into the center of the loaf comes out clean. Remove and cool completely. For best results, cool overnight before adding glaze.

Step Six

Make the glaze.

- In a small saucepan over low heat, melt ½ C butter, stirring gently until foam has died down and the solids begin to brown and release a warm, nutty fragrance.
- Whisk in ½ C each granulated sugar and brown sugar along with cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, allspice, pumpkin pie spice, and 1 Tbsp maple syrup.
- Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, about 5 minutes. Then remove from heat and cool 3-5 minutes before pouring over cooled loaf.

Serve

Sliced. If you wish to serve the slices warm, heat at 350°F / 177°C for about eight minutes.

Gailey's recommended substitutions and modifications

- **Sweet potato options.**

- Regional names for sweet potatoes vary! Your grocery store might call them “yams” or “American yams”. You’re looking for a dusky, thin-skinned tuber with orange inner flesh. If you find yourself picking up a hairy beige cylinder (Japanese mountain yam), a thick-skinned tuber with dry white flesh (true yam), or a tuber with thick tan skin and purple insides (ube), you’re headed in the wrong direction for this recipe.
- If you’re not able to get your hands on whole, uncooked sweet potatoes, try canned sweet potatoes, which are already cooked, peeled, and chopped into big chunks. Skip step 1 in the recipe. Mashing and cooking the drained canned sweet potatoes in step 2 will help get rid of the canned flavor.
- If mobility concerns make it challenging for you to peel and chop whole cooked sweet potatoes, or if you’re conserving water and don’t want to fill a pot to boil, there are a few options available.
 - Your local grocery store probably stocks pre-chopped raw sweet potatoes in the produce section! Just don’t get fooled by pre-chopped butternut squash, which looks pretty much identical.
 - Many grocery stores currently stock chopped ‘ready to steam’ sweet potatoes in the frozen section; these cook up in the microwave and will get you to Step 2 just fine.
 - Some grocery stores stock sweet potato puree in the canned food section! It’s great and will serve you well in this recipe. Just check carefully to make sure you aren’t purchasing sweet potato pet food supplement, which can be made from a lower grade of produce and which sometimes include additives that aren’t necessarily geared toward human health concerns.

- **Oil options.** This recipe calls for a neutral oil, like vegetable oil or canola oil. If you don’t use those in your cooking, seek an oil with a very neutral flavor.

Refined coconut oil, peanut oil, safflower oil, or sunflower oil are all great options. Olive oil will impart a strong flavor and should only be used as a last resort.

- **Baking powder and baking soda.** This recipe calls for both baking powder and baking soda. These are both leaveners; one acts a little faster than the other, so using both means you get a better, more extended rise on your bake. Sweet potato is fairly heavy, and this recipe includes a lot of delicious rich fats, so your leaveners are extra-important.
 - Check the freshness on your baking soda! If it's out of date, test whether it's still effective before using it. Just pour out a little bit and add a few drops of lemon juice, or vinegar.
 - If it fizzes, you're in business. If it doesn't, your baking soda is now a cleaning agent rather than a leavening agent; put it under the sink instead of in the cupboard.
 - If it fizzes weakly, consider using a little extra and adding a tiny splash of vinegar to the wet ingredients in your recipe. Don't worry — the vinegar will activate the baking soda, but it won't be enough to add any flavor to your recipe.
 - *Do not* use the baking soda that's in your refrigerator in a cardboard box. The function of that is to absorb fridge-stink, and it will make your food taste unspeakably weird.
 - If you need to, you can substitute baking powder for baking soda. You'll need 3 times as much powder as soda; in a recipe without much seasoning, this can lead you to a strange metallic flavor, but with all the spices in this loaf you should be fine. Don't try to substitute baking soda for baking powder — it doesn't work the same way.
- **Spice aversions or allergies.** If any of the spices listed raise a red flag for you, modify the recipe accordingly! Lean toward warm baking spices. If you have to leave out a lot of the spices listed, use more of the ones you're able to include.
- **Without gluten.** Use a gluten-free flour blend. Gailey likes Bob's Red Mill All-Purpose 1:1 substitute: it's a winner of a blend, and it's produced by an employee-owned company!
- **Mix your own pumpkin pie spice blend.** To make your own pumpkin pie spice, combine 1 part each cloves and allspice, 2 parts each ginger and nutmeg, and 9 parts cinnamon (all dried and ground).

- **Alternative pans.** A 9x5" loaf pan really is the ideal for this recipe, but you can also try a rectangular cake pan or a cast iron skillet. This recipe can also work for dense, breakfasty muffins; monitor closely throughout cooking to prevent overbaking, but try not to open the oven door too frequently, as steam is important to a good rise on the loaf.
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Don't forget: care for yourself and the people around you. Believe that the world can be better than it is now. Never give up.