

NO-BAKE

Banana

SPLIT CAKE

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When I was first alerted to the fact that there was an old-fashioned dessert called a “no-bake banana split cake” making its rounds on the internet, I was immediately intrigued, and on several fronts: 1) I love banana, splits; 2) I love no-bake desserts; 3) I love cake; and 4) I love old-school treats.

As I surfed the web, reading recipes, and collecting data, I learned that the dessert does not call for ice cream at all, but is instead replete with the flavors (and most of the components) of your traditional “split.” The cake is usually made with a layer of graham cracker crumbs, a few raw eggs (!) beaten with some sugar, whipped cream and a can of crushed pineapple, bananas (of course) and a sprinkling of nuts. Sometimes strawberries are folded into the mix, and often a drizzle of chocolate syrup and a few carefully positioned neon-red Maraschino cherries decorate the top.

Despite the fact that I am not much of a fan of crushed pineapple, or raw eggs, either on their own, or in my cake, I was still very much smitten with the whole concept of the dessert. I realized that with a few choice tweaks this really could be the most excellent of banana split-esque desserts.

The chocolate touch

First, being a chocaholic, I decided to substitute chocolate cookie crumbs, for the graham cracker crumbs called for in the original. I didn’t want the flavor of chocolate to overpower the cake, but I did think a chocolate crust might be just the suggestion of the flavor the cake needed. Then, knowing I needed a substitute for the cake’s raw egg and sugar layer, I notice that

some recipes called for substituting cream cheese for the eggs. I riffed on that and incorporated a layer of cream cheese whipped cream into my cake, layering it thickly atop the cookie layer (you’re welcome!).

I omitted the pineapple and included a layer of strawberries atop the bananas, in its stead. Finally, I topped the cake with homemade whipped cream (many recipes call for Cool-Whip, which I love, don’t get me wrong, but homemade seemed appropriate here). I drizzled the cream with chocolate sauce (I used Hershey’s), sprinkled on some toasted walnuts, and placed a few cherries on top, to insure the ice cream sundae/banana split vibe really popped.

The recipe is easy to put together (as the recipe title states: there is no baking) and benefits from a rest in the fridge before slicing. This is a great dessert to serve after Easter Brunch or dinner, as it feeds a crowd and will appeal to guests of all ages (and if it doesn’t, I want to hear about it . . .).

Ingredients for the cookie crust:

1 1/2 packages (13.5 ozs.) Nabisco chocolate wafers, or a similar thin and crispy cookie
1/4 cup light brown sugar
3/4 cup / 12 tbsp, unsalted butter, melted

For the cream cheese-whipped cream/banana-strawberry layer:

8 oz cream cheese, room temperature
2 cups heavy cream
2/3 cup confectioners’ sugar, sifted if lumpy
1 tbsp pure vanilla extract
1/4 tsp table salt
4 medium bananas, sliced into discs
16 oz strawberries, sliced thinly



For the whipped cream:

1 1/2 cups heavy cream
7 tbsp confectioners’ sugar

For the “sundae” toppings:

Chocolate sauce for drizzling, I used Hershey’s
1/2 – 3/4 cups walnuts, toasted and chopped
Maraschino cherries

Grease a 13x9x2-inch pan with cooking spray or softened butter. Line with parchment paper and set aside.

Add the cookies and sugar to the bowl of a food processor and process until crumbs form. Add the melted butter and process until combined. Evenly press the crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan, using the bottom of a dry measuring cup, or your fingers, making sure the crumbs are quite compact. Place in the freezer for 30 minutes, until firm.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, add the cream cheese, and whisk it on medium speed until smooth. Add the heavy cream and continue to whisk on medium speed until incorporated. Add the confectioners’ sugar, vanilla, and salt and, on medium-high speed, whisk the cream mixture until it holds

stiff peaks that stand upright when the whisk is raised.

Spread the cream cheese whipped cream over the chocolate cookie base. Top with the sliced bananas and then the strawberries.

Place the heavy cream and confectioners’ sugar in the mixer bowl (no need to clean it) and whip the cream on medium high speed until soft peaks form.

Spread the whipped cream over the bananas. Drizzle the chocolate syrup on top of the cream, and sprinkle nuts over the top.

Refrigerate for four hours, or overnight. Decoratively place the cherries on the surface of the cake before slicing and serving. •

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.