

Lien Truong • Fried Banana Cake

In 1995 my family and I took a trip to Vietnam to visit family and friends. The US had just established diplomatic relations and many families in the US were taking the opportunity to visit family they had not seen in decades. The visit was memorable and endearing, full of celebration and heartbreak, and FOOD. One of the young women I met during that trip was taking baking classes and brought home a banana cake. The *bánh chuối nướng* was delicious in flavor, and texture more like a bread pudding. At the time I was in college and working at a delicious organic bakery named The Flour Garden in Eureka, CA. The bakery owners Kevin and Ellen had a love for making exquisite, high-quality baked goods from locally harvested ingredients. They gave me a copy of Rose Levy Beranbaum's *The Cake Bible*. I set the task of bringing the fried banana flavors of Southeast Asia to a layer cake that could be frosted and potentially layered. This is an adaptation of the book's *Cordon Rose Banana Cake*, frying the bananas on both sides gives a rich banana caramel, enhanced by the addition of maple syrup.

Serves 8



Jave Yoshimoto, *Fried Banana Cake*, 2021, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper, 9" x 12".

Fried Banana Cake

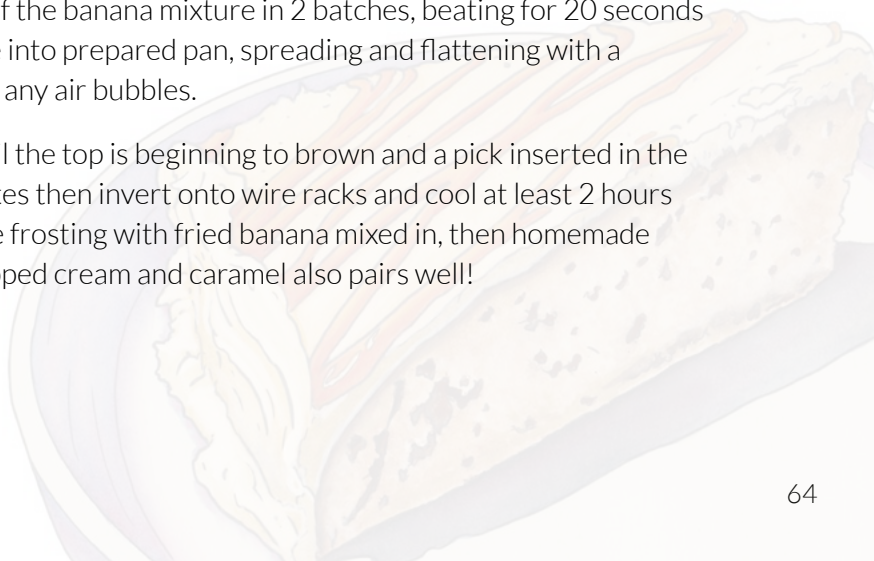
Ingredients:

Cake batter:

- 5-6 very ripe bananas
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons sour cream, room temperature
- 1.5 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 2 cup unbleached all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. In a large, flat frying pan, heat coconut oil on medium heat. Peel bananas and once oil is hot, place in sizzling oil. Fry on one side for about 8–10 min, until a dark rich brown, flip and brown on other side for 7-8 minutes. It should be fried until a rich, dark brown but not burnt. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes, then use a spatula to scrape the bottom altogether, then use a tool such as a hand potato masher to mash the banana, brown bits, and oil altogether until it is incorporated. Reserve 1 cup of banana mixture for cake batter. Any extra can be blended into cream cheese frosting option.
3. While bananas are browning, in a stand mixer place all dry ingredients and beat with a paddle attachment on medium speed for 30 seconds.
4. Combine 1 cup of fried banana in a food processor along with sour cream until smooth. Add vanilla and maple syrup and process, add eggs, and process briefly to blend.
5. Put softened butter in the mixer in the middle of dry ingredients. Take butter wrapper and grease bottom of 9" round cake pan and place parchment round on top of the bottom of the greased pan.
6. Add 1/2 cup banana mixture to the butter and dry ingredients. Mix on low speed until moistened then increase speed to medium and beat for 1.5 minutes to aerate and strengthen the cake's structure. Scrape down sides of the bowl. Add the rest of the banana mixture in 2 batches, beating for 20 seconds after each addition and scraping sides. Scrape into prepared pan, spreading and flattening with a spatula. Knock pan once on the floor to break any air bubbles.
7. Bake at 325°F for 35–38 minutes, or just until the top is beginning to brown and a pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes then invert onto wire racks and cool at least 2 hours before frosting. My favorite is a cream cheese frosting with fried banana mixed in, then homemade caramel generously drizzled on top. But, whipped cream and caramel also pairs well!



Fried Banana Cake - Topping Options

Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2.5 cups powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 leftover fried banana

The frosting can be mixed either with a hand or stand mixer, or food processor for a fine texture. Mix cream cheese and butter first, then add powdered sugar, vanilla, and any leftover fried banana. Mix or pulse till just blended, and creamy.

Whipped Cream and Caramel:

Whipped Cream:

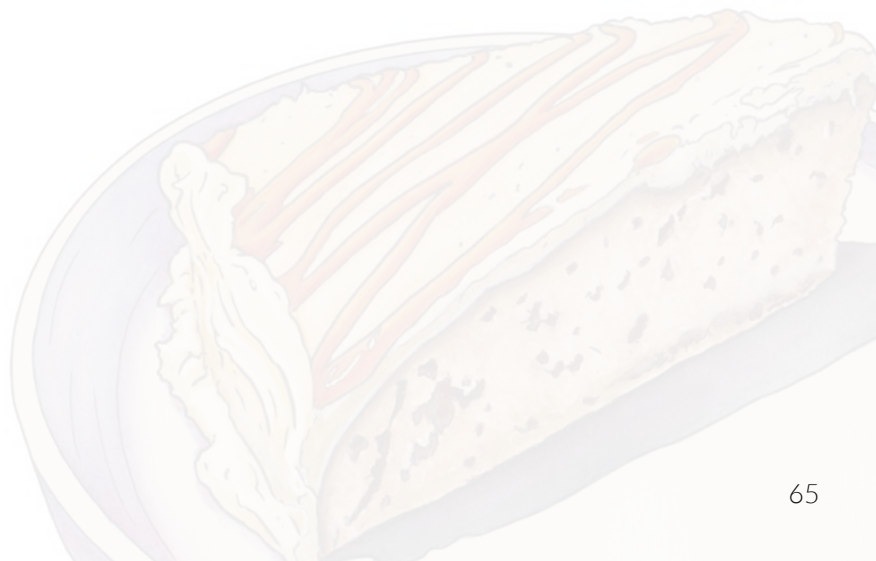
- 16 ounces heavy cream, cold
- 4 tablespoons powdered sugar or regular sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Place sugar in mixer, add cream, and mix until soft peaks form. Add vanilla and mix until stiff peaks form. Chill.

Caramel Sauce:

- 1/4 cup water
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Combine water and sugar in a pot over high heat, bring to boil. Cook 6–8 minutes to light golden brown. Swirl very minimally if needed. Remove from heat and stir in cream and salt. Return to heat and bring to a boil. Pour in a glass/ceramic container and cool.



Lien Truong



Born Saigon, Vietnam.

Lien Truong's art practice examines cultural and material ideologies and notions of heritage. Her work blends painting techniques, materials and philosophies, and military, textile and art histories, creating hybrid forms interrogating the relationship between aesthetics and doctrine. Her paintings have been presented in numerous exhibitions, including the National Portrait Gallery, North Carolina Museum of Art, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, Cameron Art Museum, Art Hong Kong, Sea Focus in Singapore, Southern Exposure, Nhasan Collective and Galerie Quynh in Vietnam. Truong is the recipient of a 2019 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant, fellowships from the Institute of the Arts and Humanities, the North Carolina Arts Council, the Jack and Gertrude Murphy Fine Arts Fellowships, and residencies at the Oakland Museum of California and the Marble House Project. Her work is featured in several publications including *Art Asia Pacific*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Oakland Tribune*, *New American Paintings*, and *ARTit Japan*. She is an Associate Professor of Art in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

lientruong.com



Lien Truong, *The Passage Through Sea, Cloth and Bone*, 2020, oil, acrylic, silk, gold pigment on canvas, 84" x 72" diptych. Photo credit: Peter Paul Geoffrion.