

## Banana Bread: A Newly Charted Learning Adventure

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### “Exploring” my options

As part of my learning experience at Truman I have now met Roger von Oech's (1986) role-players in the creative process. Now as I start to search out options for a learning event project I find myself calling upon my Explorer to help me search out these options. I found myself looking at my life now, things I have done in the recent past and things that I have been doing for a very long time, in an attempt to find just the right idea. Well this did not just happen. I had an idea as to what it was I was looking for, but I was not looking at some of the most obvious things- what I was doing right now. Well at the time I was making banana bread. This is an activity, which I engage in whenever I need a break, or happen to have rotting bananas lying around, and it is an activity that I had to learn. I never really thought about having to learn to make banana bread, I mean all I really have to do is follow a recipe right? Well it really is not that simple. So I began to explore this option a little more, dig a little deeper into my doughy past, and that is where my Explore was taken over by the Artist.

### Taking a stab

“Let the fun begin,” I say to myself as I pull out the ingredients for the first time. The fun quickly ended as I has to put everything away. My first learning experience with

making bread, and this is easily generalized to anything, is to make sure you compare what you have with what you need. I made the mistake of assuming I knew what would be needed to turn my extremely rotten bananas into a tasty sensation. Before I begin any project now I make sure that I have everything that I need before I get started. Although I am by nature a planner, I never applied this to cooking. This lack of planning was my first, but surely not my last of mistakes in the banana adventure. After my minor setback I was ready to begin again. I was extremely careful that first time, and a few times after that, to follow all the directions and never deviate. In the beginning there was no Artist in my life, only Betty Crocker, but after a few successful attempts I was able to let the Artist in me take over.

### You put what in it?

What can you put in banana bread, well really I guess what can you not? I must say that my Artist went into full throttle on this project. I can only, and so can my roommate, friends, relatives, eat so much banana bread, even if it is really good. Even the best get old after a while, so to remedy this I started to play with my (or rather Betty's) recipe. I have added cranberries, strawberries, nuts, cinnamon, extra vanilla, and countless other things in varying combinations into my bread. I am an introvert and find the Explorer and Artist roles very difficult. I do not like to make changes in things that are already good. The exceptions to this have been my adventures in making banana bread. Adding different things to the bread at first was difficult, but the more I did it the

more fun it was. Granted, not all of the variations were a success, but I would have never known had I not tried.

### The rotting issue

I also had to use my Explorer, Artist and Judge to solve a problem. What do you do with rotten bananas if you do not want to make bread? The rotting of bananas is not something that I can control, but there *was* something that I could do with them once they were rotten. I just needed to figure out what that was. The solution? Freeze them! It works with everything else that you want to preserve for another time, so why not bananas? Well bananas are no exception, one more problem solved successfully thanks to the learning process.

### Taste, the true test

Needless to say that success is not always present, but the process was fun no matter what the end result. That is something that is very nice about baking; the only real commitment you have made is your time, so as long as you have fun doing it, it is okay if it is a flop. The Judge had a very easy role in my learning process; it either tasted good or it did not. There were some other factors, such as looks, and consistency, but these things are easily overlooked if the verdict is positive on the taste factor. I am not by nature someone who likes to share or to be judged, so allowing others to give their opinion (especially when I could be negative) was a big learning step for me.

A big success came with an off the wall addition to my bread. I had always heard that you could add applesauce instead of oil, but I had never tried this, so I decided to do just that. Well, while I was searching for the applesauce I found myself in the baby food aisle. It was there that I made a wonderful discovery, apricot baby food applesauce. Who knew?! This became an all-time favorite. Then, I began the learning process again; I started to experiment with this recipe also. My roommate at the time loved to heat the bread up and put honey on it, so I thought, “what a great idea, honey glazed banana-apricot bread.” In the words of my roommate, “WOW, this is really good (said with her mouth full)!” As you can tell, a lot of the time I not only trusted my own Judge, but those of people around me who would be helping me to consume all of this bread. So not only did I learn through my own internal conversations, but I also was able to learn from others, which is probably equally important. In the same manor, I hope that those with whom I have shared the original recipe have had the same experience of learning not only more about themselves, but more about others.

### In the beginning

In the beginning, there were myths. I had always told myself that if it did not come in a box then I just should not try to make it because I was doomed to fail. It finally took numerous rotten bananas to make me try and overcome my myth of being unable to bake. I was very surprised that, even though not a total success, my baking experiment was edible on the first try. It was this initial success which made me want to try and do it better again and again. I hate to think what would have happened if I had failed that first time. I am sure that, once again, the myth about

myself would have been reinforced and the next time I thought about baking anything I would not have done it because of the belief that I would fail.

### So what have we learned?

I really must give credit at this point to all of the people who were brave enough to try the finished product of my countless number of banana bread experiments. If it were not for the conversations with those around me I do not think that I would have been nearly as creative as I have been. These conversations have helped me learn which recipes are keepers and which should be put in the trash with the bread. Not only have they helped me to judge, but they also have kept me motivated to try new things or to continue to bake in general. I am a Feeler, I need to know that what I am doing someone other than myself is benefiting from. If making a loaf of banana bread can not only be a relaxing event for myself, but also make someone else's day better that makes me feel even better about myself. This project has been a learning experience in and of itself, a learning conversation with myself you might say.

We have explored my learning processes of banana bread making, but what about teaching others? Well I hope that this serves as a way to teach others. I am including the original recipe for banana bread, with the only guidance being to make sure that you have everything it takes to make the bread. I have complete confidence that your bread baking adventure in learning will also be a success. I hope that as learners, others will be able to enjoy the same process of trial and error for new variations as I did.

### **Betty Crocker's Banana Bread**

Prep: 15 min; Bake 1 hr

Makes 2 loaves, 24 slices each

1 \_ cup sugar

\_ cup (one stick) margarine, softened

2 large eggs

1 \_ cups mashed ripe bananas (3 to 4 medium)

\_ cup buttermilk

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 \_ cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

1 cup chopped nuts, if desired

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease pans.
2. Mix sugar and margarine in large bowl. Stir in eggs until well blended. Add bananas, buttermilk and vanilla. Beat until smooth. Stir in flour, baking soda and salt just until moistened. Stir in nuts. Pour into pans.
3. Bake approx. one hour, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes in pan on wire rack. Remove from pans and allow to cool before slicing.

### References

Harri-Augstein, S. & Thomas, L. (1991). Learning Conversations. London: Routledge.

Von Oech, R. (1986) A Kick in the Seat of the Pants. New York: Harper & Row.



## Self-evaluation

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During the course of this project I have been able to explore my learning processes. By reading about the processes that we go through when we learn, I was then able to apply them. I think that by doing this I make the process a little better because I am more aware. I have never thought about my Explorer, Artist, Judge, or Warrior and this project has made me to do just that, and in doing so I have learned more about myself.

What makes this project unique is that it is an experience which is all my own. Even if someone else were to learn how to make banana bread, they would be creating their own experience. Someone else may have different ideas, or a different method for going about this new learning experience, which would make that experience different from this one. I do not believe that anyone else is going to learn, experience or share this process the same as I have done.

The project DID make me more aware, which helps me then to look more closely and easily at the learning experiences of others. It did this because I had to break my experience into little pieces and look at each one of those more closely. Normally I just look at the big picture, the finished product, but this project has made me look more closely at the components that make up that final rendition. If I can now do this with my own learning, it will come more easily when I look at how others learn because I now know what I am looking for.

I can now see more easily how others are learning, and this is the first step in helping others to learn how they are doing it. I believe that you should not teach

something which you do not know. Now that I do know, I can share this knowledge with others, so that they can experience the knowing of learning how to learn.