southern banana pudding

![A picture containing cake, table, piece, food

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*If you love bananas, you are going to LOVE* ***Southern Banana Pudding****! Classic banana pudding starts with a crunchy layer of buttery shortbread cookies, layered with perfectly ripe banana slices and the best banana pudding you’ve ever tasted! Bursting with banana flavor, creamy and so silky, it’s simply irresistible! Without a doubt, this is the BEST recipe I’ve ever made and everyone goes crazy for it!*

**INGREDIENTS**:

2 bags Pepperidge Farm Chessman Cookies

2 (5 oz.) boxes instant banana pudding

1 8 oz. block cream cheese, softened

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

1 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk

1 12 oz. container of Cool Whip or 12 ounces sweetened whipped cream

6 to 7 medium golden bananas, sliced

2 tablespoons lemon juice

3 cups whole milk or half & half

**OPTIONAL GARNISH**: Whipped Cream, Sliced Bananas and/or Chocolate Curls

**HOW I MAKE THIS**:

1. Remove cream cheese from the refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature.
2. Line bottom of 9 x 13 glass casserole dish with a single layer of cookies (1 bag of cookies).
3. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, add the cream cheese and sweetened condensed milk and mix until well blended and no lumps remain. Add milk, pudding mix and pure vanilla extract. Blend on low speed until combined, then increase speed to medium and mix for about 3 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary until well blended. The mixture will start to thicken slightly.
4. Gently fold in Cool Whip or sweetened whipped cream with a spatula – do not overmix (you don’t want the Cool Whip to deflate).
5. Pour 1/3 of pudding mixture on top of cookie layer and spread evenly.
6. Lightly toss banana slices with 2 tablespoons lemon juice and then add a single layer of sliced bananas next. (Lemon juice will help prevent the banana slices from turning brown.)
7. Pour 1/3 pudding mixture on top of bananas and smooth evenly.
8. Add another single layer of sliced bananas.
9. Pour remaining pudding mixture on top and smooth evenly.
10. Top with a single layer of cookies (1 cookie package).
11. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve. Allow at least 4 hours to chill before serving. Best served within 24 hours.
12. **OPTIONAL GARNISH**: Top with a dollop of additional Cool Whip or sweetened whipped cream and a fresh banana slice or sprinkling of chocolate curls.

**SERVINGS**: 12 servings

**RECIPE TIPS & TRICKS**:

* For best results, allow your cream cheese to come to room temperature before starting – you’ll have a creamier texture with no lumps!
* I love the way that the Pepperidge Farm Chessman Cookies look and the texture is divine, but you can substitute Nabisco Vanilla Wafers if you prefer.
* For this recipe and for the best flavor and texture, I recommend using golden ripe bananas – you don’t want to use overly ripe (no brown spots) or green bananas.
* Keep banana slices from turning brown by tossing with 2 tablespoons lemon juice.
* Although I’m not crazy about Cool Whip, I actually prefer it in this recipe because it is more stabilized than sweetened whipped cream.
* Best chilled for at least 4 hours and within 24 hours – any longer than that and the banana slices will start to darken.
* You can also prepare and serve this in a large glass trifle bowl for something special!
* For individual servings, layer in small jelly jars or mason jars (8 to 10 oz. each). This is a fun way to serve these at parties or to bring along to picnics or family reunions – just remember to keep these chilled until ready to serve! Pepperidge Farm Mini Chessman Cookies are perfect for garnishing individual servings!

**VARIATIONS OF SOUTHERN BANANA PUDDING**:

* **BANOFFEE (CARAMEL BANANA)**: After layering bananas in bottom of serving dish, drizzle with dulce de leche, caramel, or salted caramel sauce. Top with a dollop of additional Cool Whip or sweetened whipped cream and another drizzle of dulce deleche, caramel or salted caramel sauce.
* **COCONUT CREAM BANANA**: Replace one package of banana instant pudding with one package of coconut cream instant pudding. Sprinkle top with fresh or toasted coconut right before serving.
* **CHOCOLATE BANANA CREAM**: Replace one package of banana instant pudding with one package of chocolate instant pudding, and add 1 teaspoon of chocolate extract (in addition to the pure vanilla extract). Drizzle chocolate fudge sauce over top just before serving.
* **PEANUT BUTTER BANANA CREAM PUDDING**: Replace the shortbread cookies with crushed Nutter Butter Peanut Butter Cookies. Replace one package of banana instant pudding with vanilla instant pudding, and stir in 1/3 cup creamy peanut butter. Garnish with a sprinkle of honey roasted peanuts, if desired.
* **FLUFFERNUTTER BANANA CREAM PUDDING**: Replace the shortbread cookies with crushed Nutter Butter Peanut Butter Cookies. Replace one package of banana instant pudding with vanilla instant pudding, and stir in 1/3 cup creamy peanut butter. After first layer of bananas and pudding, evenly place spoonfuls of marshmallow cream or marshmallow fluff. In addition to the whipped cream on top, add dollops of marshmallow cream.
* **STRAWBERRY BANANA CREAM PUDDING**: Add sliced fresh strawberries to the layers of bananas. For topping, stir 3 tablespoons of Strawberry Jello powder into 8 ounces of Cool Whip just until evenly blended – this will give you a beautiful strawberry pink whipped cream! Top with sliced fresh strawberries and banana slices.

*Originally posted July 2016; revised and reposted May 2021.*

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