

Shaunda Necole [00:00:00]:

Hello, Beautiful Souls. Today we are talking all about Southern Banana pudding. And I'm entertaining this frequently asked question about, is banana pudding a Black thing?

So homemade banana pudding is Southern comfort food at its finest. We call it soul food. Growing up in the South, I've had the pleasure of indulging in this sweet treat all my life. But how do you make banana pudding the Black way?

Shaunda Necole [00:00:27]:

**Welcome to The Soul Food Pod!**

**The first soul food podcast about Southern soul food.**

**I'm your host, Shaunda Necole, cookbook author and food and lifestyle blogger. Making life easier plus more soulful, one recipe at a time.**

**What makes me an expert on authentic soul food?**

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**I'm a born and raised Southern girl living my best life in the fabulous entertainment and food capital of the world, Las Vegas.**

**I'm so proud to share my family's African American soul food recipes representing our beautiful people and a legacy of what we eat.**

**My mission here on The Soul Food Pod is to provide you with recipes for success.**

**So join me as I create conversations about how accessible and approachable classic Southern soul food recipes can be.**

**I'll teach you how these iconic recipes are now easy enough for anyone to make and everyone to love you.**

Shaunda Necole [00:02:04]:

Okay, Beautiful Souls, here's a little African American banana pudding history for you. Banana pudding is a signature Southern soul food dessert, served on a bed of Nilla Wafers cookies and layered with round slices of bananas in between yummy whipped topping pudding and cream cheese. It's pure bliss. Also known as soul food, banana pudding has a Southern identity that stretches back more than half a century. This dish became quintessentially Southern, probably due to the source of where it was primarily being prepared, providing the South with a more extraordinary claim to the dish.

Shaunda Necole [00:02:40]:

Southern banana pudding is an elevated version of the Americanized English trifle. This layered, homemade custard dish was reimagined to perfection by African American cooks in the South.

James Hemings, who was an enslaved African American chef in Virginia, created baked mac and cheese and used whole milk as this recipe's vital ingredient. Similarly, African American recipes for banana pudding incorporate whole milk to give the pudding a rich, smooth and silky consistency. So is banana pudding a Black thing? Netflix original series High on the Hog exposed many so-called American fruits and.

Vegetables that are actually African motherland derivatives.

Shaunda Necole [00:03:23]:

This is because African foods were brought over to North America during the horrific slave trade. Bananas are one of those fruits from an African heritage traced back as far as about 650 Ad. Two African banana varieties crossbred to yield the seedless banana we know and enjoy today. My great-grandmother was an esteemed caterer of African descent and she taught my dad how to make banana pudding with a top meringue layer, which is a fluffy topping made of egg white. It became the signature dessert he'd make for us on special occasions. Then my mom's Southern North Carolinian banana pudding recipe is similar to my dad's, but omits the meringue. We love her recipe just the same. Now, the Southern banana pudding soul food tradition has carried on into my home with the mister as the one who usually makes banana pudding at our house. And I'm so excited to share with you my family soul food take on banana pudding recipes. So back with us today is my mom, Mama Mary, to talk more about this Southern dessert delicacy. Hey, mama. How are you today?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:04:24]:

Hi, everyone. I'm great.

Shaunda Necole [00:04:27]:

So, banana pudding the Southern Black way, is the best way again. Bananas are a staple in the south, so Southern banana pudding is a delicious dessert that can be whipped up in a minute. It's perfect for any occasion. And the best part about Southern banana pudding is that it can be prepared in the morning for a same day treat. Now, whether you like banana pudding with or without meringue, this soul food version has all the best flavors and texture combinations that will make it a family favorite. You will never be able to look at other banana pudding the same way once you've tried a southern soul food variation, southern banana pudding prepared the Black way. Now, mama, how would you describe Southern banana pudding?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:05:08]:

Oh, I think I would describe it as creamy, delicious.

Shaunda Necole [00:05:13]:

Yeah, like getting mouth waters. You're just thinking about it. And how do you make your banana pudding? We talked about pop pop, my dad's banana pudding, the original mama, my great-grandmother's banana pudding. How do you make your banana pudding?

Ma-Ma Mary Mary [00:05:29]:

I make my banana pudding. I make it from scratch, and I use very ripe bananas. That's a very important ingredient.

Shaunda Necole [00:05:40]:

Sure is. Okay, what about the layers? Like, what else do you layer in yours?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:05:45]:

Well, I layer the pudding first at the bottom of the pan, and then I'll go with cookies, bananas, pudding, cookies, bananas until we get to the top, and that last layer should be pudding.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:03]:

Okay, so, do you top it with.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:06]:

Whipped cream, or is it just pudding on top?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:06:08]:

Sometimes I top it with whipped cream, but most times, I just like the pudding on top.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:13]:

Okay.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:14]:

Wow.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:14]:

I love the different ways that it's made, but usually, again, the texture. And we'll talk about some of those other elements that are essential for a southern soul food the Black way of making banana pudding. Okay, so let's go ahead and talk more about how to make Southern banana pudding the Black way with some of your frequently asked questions. Beautiful souls. So, the

first question we always get is, what kind of bananas do you use? And, mama, you just kind of answered that. But can you say it again. It's worth saying again.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:06:43]:

Yes. Make sure you use very ripe bananas.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:47]:

If you can find the ones with.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:06:49]:

A few dark spots on them.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:52]:

Right. So you don't want green bananas?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:06:54]:

No green bananas.

Shaunda Necole [00:06:56]:

And you don't want the banana that's just all yellow?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:06:59]:

No, they're not ripe enough to give banana pudding that sweetness.

Shaunda Necole [00:07:03]:

Right. So the sweetness is in the ripeness of the banana. So that's going to be very important. Now, people always also ask what can you substitute for Nilla Wafers in banana pudding?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:07:14]:

I would say nothing.

Shaunda Necole [00:07:18]:

Right.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:07:19]:

Only a vanilla wafer is right for a banana pudding.

Shaunda Necole [00:07:24]:

And she is so right. My answer to that is always nothing. There is no substitute when making a Black Southern banana pudding recipe. Trying substitutions for the brand called Nilla Wafers is not recommended. There again, are simply no substitutions.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:07:40]:

Yes, that's a red light.

Shaunda Necole [00:07:41]:

Right. So not even vanilla extract, vanilla bean and definitely not other brands of vanilla wafers or vanilla cookies. And I am one that I do enjoy like an off-brand of certain food products. This is not one where we want to skimp on that. We want the Nilla Wafers brand. I believe that's Nabisco of cookies. So you can ask which I just did, any Black mama, auntie or grandma and they'll tell you that Nilla Wafers is the official cookie of soul food. Banana pudding, butter cookies, shortbread sponge cake and graham crackers or graham crackers are excellent substitute for other pudding recipes like a fruit crumble, a trifle or even an ice box cake. But it's best that you not try to substitute other cookies when making Southern banana pudding. The Black wave. Something about that little Nilla Wafer makes a distinctive difference in the flavor. I think you were saying something to me earlier about that distinctive difference about the texture and the weight of that Nilla Wafers that's imperative in the banana pudding. Yes.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:08:51]:

The texture of the vanilla wafer is just so different from other cookies. It doesn't break down as fast as the other cookies. And I guess I could backtrack and say there is one cookie I might use in a banana pudding and that's the one, the tea cookie that you made the recipe for. Okay. That has just the right texture for a banana pudding.

Shaunda Necole [00:09:19]:

Okay. So Beautiful Souls, are you listening? Mama just shared some exclusive tip right here today with you that you said again that the only exception to the Southern brand of putting the Black way rule is that you could possibly use tea cake cookies, which is also another Southern soul food favorite. So a tea cake cookie, homemade tea cake cookies could possibly substitute in for the Nilla Wafers cookie.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:09:49]:

Yes.

Shaunda Necole [00:09:50]:

We are going to try that, Beautiful Souls. So don't feel like you got to run out and try this at home. We'll try it out on the soul food pot and come back to the soul food pod and let you know how that works. All right, so the texture of the cookie is uniquely crisp and aerated. The Nilla Wafers cookies that you already prepared and I like this description from Bonac Petite. They describe it best about Nilla Wafers. And they say, quote, as the cookies nestle into a bed of whipped cream or pudding, a Nilla Wafers cookie hydrates to create dissolve in your mouth, crumbs, not wet mush like other brands. End quote.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:10:29]:

Absolutely.

Shaunda Necole [00:10:31]:

I think they said it best. This makes Nilla's the perfect pairing for Southern Banana Pudding. So make your banana pudding the authentic Southern soul food Black way. It's the best way guaranteed to be quickly devoured. So people also ask, how do you make Paula Dean's banana pudding? And the answer to that is her recipe is similar to soul food Southern Banana pudding, except she does not use Nilla Wafer cookies.

Ma-Ma Mary [00:10:59]:

Well, what cookie does she use?

Shaunda Necole [00:11:01]:

She uses shortbread butter cookies, which is blasphemy if you are making banana pudding the Black way. So, Beautiful sSuls. You also wanted to know what ingredients are in Patti LaBelle's banana pudding. And Miss Patti incorporates heavy cream and condensed milk into her recipe. And I think she's putting that in the pudding. So another popular question is how do you make a Southern banana pudding recipe? With instant pudding? And that one's really easy. Instant pudding is perfectly okay for Southern banana pudding. It actually works just as good as Cook and Serve or homemade banana or homemade pudding in the banana pudding. But the answer to your question for instant pudding is simply mix the instant pudding with milk per the box instructions. It's super easy then, to make an easy Southern banana pudding recipe with instant pudding, simply layer the cookies, banana slices, pudding and whipped cream on top. Now, Mama, can you share your answer to this question? What to put on bananas to keep them from browning and banana pudding?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:12:03]:

You could put lemon juice on the bananas, but my recommendation is to slice the bananas just before you're ready to make your banana pudding. Do it like pudding, slice the bananas, cookies, pudding. Slice the banana layer like that and you won't have to worry about the browning.

Shaunda Necole [00:12:26]:

Right. That'd be my always go to answer. It's an easy, simple pattern, like you said. Cookie, banana pudding, cookies, banana pudding. Yeah. Lemon juice is kind of known to be something you can put on fruit to help stop the browning oxidation process with sliced fruit. I can't say for sure whether the lemons are going to have a compromising effect to the banana pudding recipe. Probably not, but I don't know. I don't do it that way. In all honesty, I try to keep my banana pudding as clean and integral as possible. So since I can't say for sure the best way is exactly what Mama said, which is usually the best way, what she said, and that is to slice your bananas as you are layering in your banana pudding. It keeps it clean and easy. Now, Mama, how do you keep the banana pudding from getting watery?

Ma-Ma Mary [00:13:22]:

Well, the best way is to follow your recipe directly. Just do what the recipe says and don't add or subtract anything, and I think you'll be good to go.

Shaunda Necole [00:13:33]:

Right 100%. And a pro tip here. The Soul Food Pots banana pudding recipe incorporates cream cheese as a tasty, thickener. We mix the cream cheese with the whip topping. It's so good. So if you're following a soulfoodpot.com recipe, you won't have to worry about whether your bananas are going to get watery. Just follow the recipe as she just said, per the instructions, and you will be fine.

Shaunda Necole [00:13:57]:

In conclusion, banana pudding is a Southern dessert with a rich African American history. And while it may be a Black thing, it's also easy enough for anyone to make and everyone to love.

Shaunda Necole [00:14:15]:

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**Also linked for your convenience in the episode description.**

Shaunda Necole [00:15:11]:

So all right, Beautiful Souls, we'll leave it at that. So when you're ready to make a Southern Soul food banana pudding, head to [TheSoulFoodPot.com](http://TheSoulFoodPot.com) For Mama's Banana Pudding recipe also linked in the episode. This episode's description for your convenience. And until next time, Beautiful Souls, remember that food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.

Shaunda Necole [00:15:36]:

**Thank you for joining me for this episode of the Soul Food Pod. Did you enjoy today's conversation and recipe?**

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