

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Bake Time: 60–70 minutes

Cool Time: 15 minutes in pan + cooling before slicing

Total Time: Approximately 1 hour 35 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes

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Ingredients

For the Cream Cheese Filling

- 8 oz (226 g) full-fat block cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- ¼ cup (50 g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

For the Cranberry Bread Batter

- 2 cups (240 g) all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (113 g) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar

- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup (120 ml) sour cream or plain Greek yogurt, room temperature
- 1½ cups (about 150 g) fresh or frozen cranberries (do not thaw if frozen)

Optional Topping

- 2 tablespoons coarse sugar or streusel
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Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Oven and Pan (5 minutes)

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a 9×5-inch loaf pan thoroughly with butter or nonstick spray, then line the bottom and long sides with parchment paper, leaving an overhang for easy removal. A properly prepared pan is essential because the cream cheese layer can make the loaf prone to sticking.

Step 2: Make the Cream Cheese Filling (5 minutes)

In a medium bowl, beat the softened cream cheese and ¼ cup sugar with an electric mixer on medium speed until completely smooth and lump-free, about 1–2 minutes. Add the egg

and vanilla, and beat just until combined. Scrape down the bowl and set the filling aside. It should be thick and spreadable, not runny—if it is warm, pop it in the refrigerator for 10 minutes while you make the batter.

Step 3: Mix the Dry Ingredients (3 minutes)

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Whisking aerates the flour and ensures the leavening agents are evenly distributed, which helps the loaf rise consistently. Set aside.

Step 4: Cream the Butter and Sugar (4 minutes)

In a large bowl, beat the softened butter and 1 cup sugar with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until lightened in color and fluffy, about 3–4 minutes. This creaming step incorporates air and gives the loaf a tender crumb. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Step 5: Add Eggs and Vanilla (2 minutes)

Beat in the eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add the vanilla and mix until incorporated. The mixture should look smooth and glossy.

Step 6: Alternate Dry Ingredients and Sour Cream (3 minutes)

With the mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the sour cream in two additions. Begin and end with the flour mixture. Mix only until the last streaks of flour disappear—overmixing develops gluten and results in a tough, dense loaf.

Step 7: Fold in the Cranberries (1 minute)

Gently fold the cranberries into the batter with a rubber spatula. If using frozen cranberries, do not thaw them; folding them in frozen prevents their color from bleeding into the batter. Toss them with a tablespoon of flour first if you want extra insurance against sinking.

Step 8: Layer the Batter and Filling (3 minutes)

Spread half of the cranberry batter evenly into the prepared loaf pan. Spoon the cream cheese filling over the batter, spreading it gently but leaving a ½-inch border around the edges—this helps prevent the filling from seeping out during baking. Top with the remaining batter, spreading it carefully to cover the cream cheese completely. If desired, sprinkle the top with coarse sugar.

Step 9: Bake (60–70 minutes)

Bake on the center rack for 60–70 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the bread portion (not directly into the cream cheese layer) comes out clean or with just a few moist crumbs. If the top browns too quickly after 45 minutes, tent it loosely with foil. The internal temperature should reach approximately 200°F (93°C) for a moist quick bread.

Step 10: Cool and Serve (15 minutes + cooling)

Let the loaf cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then use the parchment overhang to lift it onto a wire rack. Cool for at least 30–45 minutes before slicing. The cream cheese layer needs time to set; slicing too early can cause it to smear. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Storage and Make-Ahead Notes

Store the cooled loaf in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days, or refrigerate for up to 5 days. For longer storage, wrap tightly and freeze for up to 2 months; thaw overnight in the refrigerator before serving. The loaf actually tastes even better the next day, once the flavors have melded.

Nutrition Information (Estimated)

Serving Size: 1 slice (based on 10 slices per loaf)

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	Approximately 380–400 kcal
Total Fat	20–22 g
Saturated Fat	12–13 g
Cholesterol	85–95 mg
Sodium	250–280 mg
Total Carbohydrates	45–48 g
Dietary Fiber	1–2 g
Total Sugars	26–28 g
Protein	5–6 g