



BANANA TALKING POINTS

2. A Slice of History

- The true origin of Bananas is found in the region of Malaysia. By way of curious visitors, bananas traveled from there to India where they are mentioned in the Buddhist Pali writings dating back to the 6th century BCE.
- In his campaign in India in 327 BCE, Alexander the Great relished his first taste of the banana, an usual fruit he saw growing on tall trees. He is even credited with bringing the banana from India to the Western world.
- According to Chinese historian Yang Fu, China was tending plantations of bananas in 200 CE. These bananas grew only in the southern region of China and were considered exotic, rare fruits that didn't become popular with the Chinese masses until the 20th century.
- Bananas are native to tropical South and Southeast Asia, and are likely to have been first domesticated in Papua New Guinea. Today, they are cultivated throughout the tropics. They are grown in at least 107 countries, primarily for their fruit, and to a lesser extent to make fiber, banana wine and as ornamental plants.
- Eventually, this tropical fruit reached Madagascar, an island off the southeastern coast of Africa. Beginning in 650 CE Islamic warriors traveled into Africa and were actively engaged in the slave trade. Along with the thriving business in slave trading, the Arabs were successful in trading ivory along with abundant crops of bananas. Through their numerous travels westward via the slave trade, bananas eventually reached Papua New Guinea, a small area along the West Coast of Africa.
- By 1402 Portuguese sailors discovered the luscious tropical fruit in their travels to the African continent and populated the Canary Islands with their first banana plantations.
- Continuing the banana's travels westward, the rootstocks were packed onto a ship under the charge of Tomas de Berlanga, a Portuguese Franciscan monk who brought them to the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo from the Canary Islands in the year 1516. It wasn't long before the banana became popular throughout the Caribbean as well as Central America.
- Arabian slave traders are credited with giving the banana its popular name. The bananas that were growing in Africa as well as Southeast Asia were not the eight-to-twelve-inch giants that have become familiar in the U.S. supermarkets today. They were small, about as long as a man's finger. Ergo the name banan, Arabic for finger. The Spaniards, who saw a similarity to the plane tree that grows in Spain, gave the plantain its Spanish name, platano.
- It was almost three hundred and fifty years later that Americans tasted the first bananas to arrive in their country. Wrapped in tin foil, bananas were sold for 10 cents each at a celebration held in Pennsylvania in 1876 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Instructions on how to eat a banana appeared in the Domestic Cyclopaedia of Practical Information and read as follows: "Bananas are eaten raw, either alone or cut in slices with sugar and cream, or wine and orange juice. They are

also roasted, fried or boiled, and are made into fritters, preserves, and marmalades."

4 & 5. How Do Bananas Grow?

- Bananas, are not a commercial crop in the United States; they are grown in tropical regions, mostly in Central and South America. Bananas entering the United States come from Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua. Yellow bananas are available year-round, exotic varieties are more seasonal. Bananas are harvested green, because if vine-ripened, the starch in bananas doesn't turn to sugar and they become bland with a cottony texture. There are some one thousand varieties in the world today.
- Bananas can be harvested year-round because they grow in tropical areas that have a fairly consistent climate all year.

6. Reasons to Eat Bananas

- Vitamins and minerals are abundant in the banana, offering 5.9 mg of vitamin A for the large size. A full range of B vitamins are present with .07 mg of Thiamine, .15 mg of Riboflavin, .82 mg Niacin, .88 mg vitamin B6, and 29 mcg of Folic Acid. There are even 13.8 mg of vitamin C. On the mineral scale Calcium

counts in at 9.2 mg, Magnesium 44.1 mg, with trace amounts of iron and zinc. Putting all of the nutritional figures together clearly shows the banana is among the healthiest of fruits. The plantain, when cooked, rates slightly higher on the nutritional scale in vitamins and minerals but similar to the banana in protein and fiber content.

- **Benefits of eating bananas**
 - Anemia: Bananas are relatively high in iron, which helps the body's hemoglobin function.
 - Constipation and Diarrhea: Due to their content in fiber, they help restore a normal bowel function. In addition, diarrhea usually depletes your body of important electrolytes (of which the most important is potassium, contained in high amounts in bananas). They also contain pectin, a soluble fiber (hydrocolloid) that can help normalize movement through the digestive tract.
 - Healthy Kidneys: About 190,000 cases of kidney cancer are diagnosed each year. Research published in the *International Journal of Cancer* has shown that daily consumption of whole fruits and vegetables, especially bananas, is highly protective to kidney health.
 - Blood Pressure: Bananas are extremely high in potassium

(about 4673mg), yet very low in sodium (1mg), thus having a perfect ratio for preventing high blood pressure.

- Heartburn: Bananas have a natural antacid effect in the body, so if you suffer from heartburn, try eating a banana for soothing relief.
- Ulcers: This is the only raw fruit that can be eaten without distress in over-chronicle cases. It also helps reduce acidity and reduces irritation. Bananas stimulate the cells on the internal stomach lining to produce a thicker mucus (which protects against acid). Additionally, bananas contain *protease inhibitors* that help eliminate bacteria in the stomach that have been pinpointed as a primary cause of ulcers.
- Nerves: Bananas are high in B vitamins that have been shows to improve nerve function.
- Stress Relief: Bananas are high in potassium, which helps normalize the heartbeat and regulate the body's water balance. During periods of high stress, our body's potassium levels tend to be rapidly depleted: eating bananas is a healthy way to rebalance them without using drugs.
- Stroke: According to a study in The New England Journal of Medicine, eating bananas as part

of a regular diet can reduce the risk of death by strokes by as much as 40%

7. How do you pick a good Banana?

- It's best to purchase bananas when they are 75% yellow, with a small amount of green at both ends. They should be plump, firm, brightly colored, without blemishes, but occasional brown spots on the skin are normal. There isn't any difference in the quality between small and large fruit. Bananas should be kept at room temperature because bananas stored in the refrigerator will not ripen any further and they will turn black. You can refrigerate ripe bananas for a couple of days to keep them from spoiling. While the skin will turn a dark brown, the flesh will remain firm and white, although the flavor may be affected somewhat.

Fun Fact

- The banana plant is not a tree. It is actually the world's largest herb! Americans have made bananas their favorite fruit. The average person in North America eats 29 pounds of bananas a year. Nearly an ideal food, the banana has a great deal to offer nutritionally. Bananas contain less water than most other fruits, so their carbohydrate content, by weight, is higher, which is one of the

reasons that bananas are a favorite of endurance athletes.

- Athletes trying to naturally replace spent nutrients should consider eating a few bananas before, and after strenuous workouts.
- **Varieties**
 - **Cavendish or Giant**
Cavendish is the main commercial variety, and is the familiar yellow banana you always see.
 - **Manzano** bananas are also called apple or finger bananas because of their apple-like flavor and size. The light

golden color turns totally black when ripe.

- **Red bananas**, also known as **Makabu** or **Morado**, are stubby and round with a pinkish-orange flesh that has a sweet but hearty flavor. The dull red skin turns purplish red when ripe.
- **Saba and Brazilian** are straight, medium-size, and somewhat tart bananas. They turn a dark yellow when ripe.
- **Plantains**, which look like large, green bananas, are usually cooked and eaten as a vegetable.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 medium banana (126g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 110	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 29g	10%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 21g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 15%
Calcium 0%	Iron 2%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
Three medium bananas weigh about 1 pound. One medium banana makes about 2/3 cup of sliced fruit. Two medium bananas make 1 cup of diced fruit. Three medium bananas make 1 cup of mashed fruit.	