

## SWEETS

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One simple cooking technique is used for both dishes. You heat oil until it is hot enough to deep-fry, from about 350 to 375 degrees. Then you drop in the (peeled) banana or the (sliced) sweet potatoes.

These will start to turn golden brown after a few minutes. That is when you add a handful or two of brown sugar. Spoon the brown sugar-oil over the bananas or sweet potato slices, occasionally turning the pieces, until they are golden brown all over.

Remove them from the pot, shake off as much oil as you can, and allow them to cool for a couple of minutes. Place one or two on a skewer, just because everything tastes better on a skewer or at least is more fun, and serve.

Before you rush off and try the banana cue, though, you should know that it doesn't work on what we Americans think of as ordinary bananas. Believe me, I tried. And as I had feared, the most common bananas in the



Hillary Levin / St. Louis Post-Dispatch/TNS

Fried banana with brown sugar, on a stick.

United States are too soft and narrow to stand up to the rigors of deep-fat frying.

In the Philippines they use a squatter, thicker, starchier variety of banana called saba bananas, also known as cardaba bananas. That's a perfect ingredient, but they can be hard to find in this country, so I used burro bananas.

Burro bananas are usually grown in Mexico, and are also shorter and thicker

than the bananas we are accustomed to. They can be deep-fried with impunity, and also happen to be delicious. I bought mine at Global Foods Market.

I also decided to try to make banana cue with plantains, and they worked fine. They are certainly hearty enough to be fried with ease, and they happen to taste great when fried and caramelized. But they aren't as sweet as the burro bananas,

and I missed that extra dimension to the snack. And finally, a word about clean-up. You may find that, after you are done, you have clumps of cooked brown sugar stuck to the bottom of your pot. It may seem difficult to get it off, but actually it is quite easy: Just put a couple of inches of water in the pot and bring it to a boil. The sugar will dissolve, and any part of it that doesn't dissolve will be easy to remove.

Your pot will be so clean you'll want to use it again to make more banana or camote cue.

### CAMOTE CUE

Yield: 6 servings

**3 cups oil, for frying**  
**3 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch slices**  
**½ cup brown sugar**

1. Pour oil into a large pot. Heat over medium heat until hot enough to deep fry, about 375 degrees.
2. Carefully add the slices; the oil should immediately start to bubble. Turn slices occasionally until beginning to turn light brown. Sprinkle brown sugar over top and cook sweet potatoes, turning occasionally with tongs or a spoon.
3. Camote cue is done when the sweet potatoes are a golden brown all over and can easily be pierced with a

fork or sharp knife. Remove from oil and allow to cool for a minute. Place 2 or 3 pieces on a skewer, and serve warm.

Per serving: 423 calories; 36 g fat; 3 g saturated fat; no cholesterol; 1 g protein; 25 g carbohydrate; 14 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 39 mg sodium; 30 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

### BANANA CUE

Yield: 6 servings

**Oil for frying**  
**6 saba or burro bananas, or 3 plantains, peeled**  
**½ cup brown sugar**

1. Pour oil into a pot big enough to hold all the bananas or plantains; the oil should be at least high enough to come about halfway up the side of the bananas, 2 to 3 cups, depending on the size of the pot. Heat over medium

- heat until hot enough to fry, about 375 degrees.
2. Carefully add the bananas (cut the plantains in half first, if using); the oil should immediately start to bubble. Turn bananas occasionally until beginning to turn light brown. Sprinkle brown sugar over top and cook, turning bananas occasionally with tongs and spooning sugared oil over the top of bananas if they are above the oil.
  3. Banana cue is done when the bananas are a golden brown all over. Remove from oil and allow to cool for a couple of minutes. Place 1 or 2 pieces on a skewer, and serve warm.

Per serving: 476 calories; 37 g fat; 3 g saturated fat; no cholesterol; 1 g protein; 40 g carbohydrate; 25 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 7 mg sodium; 13 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

## PLASTICS

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Some "bioplastic" containers also contain a plastic liner. Many natural fiber materials for clothing, packaging, and personal care products also include inorganic and non-degrading polymers. Truly biodegradable choices are expanding and it is worth looking for and encouraging the adoption of products and packaging made from natural fibers. Natural products can be made from starch (wheat, corn, potato, cassava), chitin (shells of insects, crabs), cutin (tomato skins), protein fiber/keratin (milk, silk, wool), lignin (wood, woody plants), cellulose (cotton, hemp, jute, sisal, bamboo) as well as algae and fungi polymers. When I see all the natural alternatives it makes me wonder why we ever chose to wrap our food and ourselves in petrochemicals in the first place.

Plastic straws recently be-

came a symbol of the single-use controversy and were ripe for redesign. Surely the new bamboo and wheat straws, and the resurgence of the old paper straws, are much better for us and the environment. But this is where rethinking comes into play: do we even need straws in the first place? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of convenience products that are unnecessary and often not convenient. So many products are overpackaged it makes my head spin. Instead of choosing between water bottles that are 100% plastic but recyclable and 20% plastic but not recyclable, how about we choose neither and use a refillable metal water bottle? Let's rethink what and how we buy. We can buy fresh produce with no containers and our own shopping bags from farmers' markets and Val's Veggies. We can choose bulk at the grocery store instead of pre-packaged. We can choose reusable instead

of disposable razors. We can plan ahead when we eat out and bring our own take-home containers. Personally, it will be hard for me to give up my polyester fleeces, but I plan to rethink my clothing choices, focusing on durability and natural fibers.

We will all be rethinking our bag choices in January when the new single-use grocery bag ban goes into effect. If you would like to prepare while also using up that stockpile of bags in the basement, please join the Trash Talk free tote making workshop. Here are the details:

- Recycled Tote Bag Workshop
- Friday, November 15, 2019
- 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Baker County Library meeting rooms, 2400 Resort St.

Are you stressed about Oregon's new single-use plastic bag ban? Come learn how to make durable, attractive, reusable shopping totes

from waste bags. In this free two-hour workshop Baker City Trash Talk member Ann Mehaffy will teach us how to "upcycle" feed bags and make cloth bags, while Jeanie Zebrak will teach us how to crochet bags from "plarn," which is yarn made from thin grocery bags. We will provide instructions and some supplies, bags to recycle, plus time to get a good start on your first bag.

Please bring the following if you have it: sharp scissors, crochet hooks (any size H though N), clean and dry grocery and feed bags you would like to upcycle, cloth if you would like to make cloth bags. A portable sewing machine would be warmly welcomed.

Please register via email at BakerCityTrashTalk@gmail.com or on Facebook at @BCTrashTalk.

## NUTTY

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- California black walnut (*J. hindsii*). Zones 5-9. Native to some areas of Northern California, this is a 30- to 60-foot tree with a single trunk and broad crown, and leaves with 15 to 19 leaflets. Often used as a rootstock to graft English walnut trees as it is drought-tolerant.
- Black walnut (*J. nigra*). Zones 1-9. Native to the eastern U.S., it grows to 150 feet, although usually 100 feet or shorter in the West. Leaves have 15 to 23 leaflets. The trunk is a furrowed black-brown. Nuts are 1 to 1.5 inches, very hard, and have a good, rich flavor. There are improved varieties such as "Thomas," with thinner shells. Drought-tolerant. Don't plant near vegetable or flower gardens, rhododendrons or azaleas, as black walnuts exude a secretion inhibiting growth in these species. The trees have a long dormant season, and are first to lose leaves in fall and the last to leaf out in spring.
- English walnut (*J. Regia*). Zones 4-9. Native to southwest Asia, these grow to 60 feet with equal spread. Leaves have 5 to 7 leaflets, and the trunk has smooth gray bark. Tree is hardy to 5 below zero, but some varieties can be injured by late or early frosts in colder or northern regions. Strains from the Carpathian Mountains in Eastern Europe are much hardier.

English walnuts are dormant for a long time, messy when in leaf, messy in fruiting season as husks can stain even though they come loose from the nuts easily, unlike black walnuts. They need deep soil and deep watering. Many people are allergic to the pollen.

All husks should be removed and walnuts dried in a single layer spread out in airy shade until the inner nuts are brittle. Nuts should be gathered immediately after they fall.

"Carmello" and "Cooke's Giant Sweet" are best varieties. Grafted, named varieties are superior to seedlings. In zones 1-3, grow the Carpathian or hardy Persian.

- Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*). Juglandaceae. Deciduous ornamental tree, zones 4-9, native to the southern and central U.S. Graceful, shapely tree to 70 feet tall and equally as wide. Leaves with 11 to 17 leaflets, and a finer texture than the walnuts. Needs deep, well-drained soil. Intolerant of any salt in the soil. Deep watering is necessary in the summer. To plant, set out bare root trees in winter. Dig deep holes to accommodate the long taproot. Position bud union above the soil level and plant about an inch deeper than they were in the pot. Firm the soil, water thoroughly, and irrigate every two weeks for the first year.

If you have garden comments or questions, please write to greengardencolumn@Yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

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