

Asia First Home Of Bananas

The edible banana had its first home in the humid region of Southern Asia. However, it is believed that the word banana is undoubtedly of West African origin. Bananas came into rather general use through the Portuguese navigators who carried bananas and other fruits and plants around the world.

Today, bananas grow in Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama and are imported to the United States.

Check bananas today and you will find that this fruit is always among the least expensive on the market. However, it costs more to raise bananas and ship them safely than to produce and market many other fruits in the world.

Without efficient farming operations, bananas would cost their weight in gold.

Bananas are subject to many disasters. Although the banana plant grows very quickly, it produces only one stem of fruit and the plant is cut down when the stem is harvested. Hurricanes take their toll of crops and floods are a menace. The fruit is extremely delicate and it is easily

blemished. After the bunches are cut, they must be coddled like babies. The stems require a near-constant temperature from field to the wholesaler: 57 degrees Fahrenheit spells perfection. Below 53 degrees the fruit gets a chill; above 60 degrees it begins ripening. To bring bananas from the tropics, controlled temperature ships are required and to ship the fruit inland, refrigerator freight cars or trucks are a necessity.

Banana "nurses" called "Perishable Fruit Inspectors" are employed to ride with the fruit to see that the bunches are safely delivered.

Research specialists, perhaps, do more than any other group in bringing bananas safely to market. The work to insure a quality crop. The banana is not only a gift of nature; it is equally a creation of man—all kinds of men: agriculturists, engineers, plant pathologists, and physiologists; entomologists, statisticians, field workers, stevedores and sea captains.

A banana farm is an expensive undertaking. First the surveyors move in to select sites suitable

for cultivation, land easily obtained and location near a port. The jungle must be conquered, forests slashed and swamps drained. Thousands of banana rhizomes are buried in shallow holes and new farms are born.

A farm isn't all. There is a small city to build. Housing must be provided to shelter workers and hospitals built to care for the sick. Roads and railroads must be built to connect with the port. Sometimes aerial highways are required to connect various parts of the plantation with the main line. Telephone lines must be strung, electric and ice plants and water works built. Dairy farms are established to provide pasteurized milk. A commissary is opened to supply the community. Churches and schools are built and teachers are hired.

Bananas are too delicate to be shipped as ordinary freight. Therefore, specially designed ships and equipment are required to bring them from the tropics. This fruit is exported to nearly all the Atlantic and Gulf ports and to San Francisco and Los Angeles on the Pacific Coast.

Because of an old legend that the sages of India reposed in the shade of the plant and refreshed themselves with its fruit, the banana is called the "Fruit of the Wise Men." Today, wise shoppers include bananas in their weekly list, because they are nutritious, easily digested, very palatable, inexpensive and require little preparation.

Bananas rank high among the "protective foods." They have well rounded vitamin and mineral content. In addition to 12 essential minerals, bananas are well endowed with Vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, Vitamin C and niacin. Bananas have the added virtue of containing less than 1 percent fat content with none of this being in the form of cholesterol. For persons concerned with salt poor diets, the banana can be included, freely, for the sodium content is conspicuously low, well under 0.4 mg. per banana.

Bananas furnish the body with the quick food energy needed especially by children, athletes and industrial workers. This is due to their high content of easily digestible fruit sugars which help to overcome fatigue and give a quick "pick-up."

The average-size banana has only 80 calories and their unusual satiety value makes them satisfying and filling.

Bananas are not limited to any time or place. They are enjoyed by every age group and every income bracket. The banana plays many roles in menu-planning. It may become one of the ingredients in a fruit cocktail for the first course, or accompany the main course as a vegetable. Bananas are always popular in salads and mashed bananas are a delicious addition when baking bread or cakes. They may be included as a dessert ingredient, or they can serve as a dessert on their own. The banana is always good for a snack, a lunchbox, and it is a fine idea to include them in a decorative bowl of fruit.

Yes, the versatile banana has a personality all its own and only a few of the facts are included here that make this widely known fruit so universally popular.

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FROM FAR AWAY — Each stem of bananas is encased in polyethylene after washing as it is shown here, in a loading station in Guatemala. Bananas are extremely delicate and hard to handle and every effort must be made to prevent bruising.



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GROWTH — One stem of bananas grows on each plant. The plant is cut down when the stem is harvested. Note that fruit grows upside down to way bananas arrive in shipment.

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LUNCH BOX RIPE OLIVES

Drain and dry some ripe olives, then roll them in a little olive or salad oil before tucking into sandwich bags. Keeps them shiny. Chopped ripe olives add flavor to

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a variety of sandwiches — chopped ripe olives to spread on with crisp shredded cabbage. In chicken or tuna salad. Combine whole wheat bread. Or pack clude a tiny container of French shredded carrots, mayonnaise and a little paper or plastic carton dressing.

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