

February – Featured Fruit: BANANA



PEEL. EAT.



(how easy is that?)



Hey there, I'm Bobby Banana!¹

Dude, are you ready to go bananas for bananas? Great! You know bananas are so ap-peal-ing, its no wonder they're loved by everyone. Hey, are you ready to come along with me on an exciting banana adventure? Then let's get going and have fun exploring all the cool stuff about bananas.

Facts

Bananas do not grow on trees. They grow on plants that are giant herbs and are related to the lily and orchid family.

The average person eats 33 pounds of bananas a year.

Bananas have been grown for over 1 million years.

Over 4 million tons of bananas are imported into the United States every year.

Bananas are harvested every day of the year, and are available year-round.

Bananas are a good source of vitamin C, fiber, and potassium.

Bananas are the most popular fruit in America.

History

Even though our bananas come from Latin America, their historic journey takes them all the way back to the Malaysian jungles of Southeast Asia. It is believed bananas originated in Malaysia because so many varieties of bananas are found there.

Bananas were probably the first fruit farmed by man. Their history is recorded all the way back to Alexander the Great's conquest of India, where he first discovered bananas in 327 B.C.

When Spanish explorers came to the New World, so did the banana. According to Spanish history, in 1516 Friar Tomas de Berlanga brought the first banana root stocks and planted them in the rich fertile soil of the Caribbean.

In the 1800s, sailors brought a few stems of bananas home with them after traveling in the Caribbean. Bananas were officially introduced to Americans at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Each banana was wrapped in foil and sold for 10 cents.

Source: ¹Dole 5 A Day. www.dole5aday.com



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Where Grown

Bananas grow in tropical areas all around the world where the weather is sunny and hot. Bananas for North America are imported from Central and South America. Bananas entering the United States come from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Mexico, and Nicaragua.

Bananas received a new name each time a different group of people were introduced to them. In fact, centuries ago bananas were called "banna" and "ghana" and even "funana." The Africans are credited with giving the banana its permanent name.

In India, bananas were called "Fruit of the Wise Men." According to Indian legend, wise men meditated under the shady, green leaves of banana plants. Don't you wish you had a banana plant in your back yard?

Types

There are hundreds of types of banana plants that grow throughout the world. However, not all of these plants actually produce bananas. Some plants do not produce any edible fruit but are used in landscaping for their beautiful foliage. Other banana plants produce plantains, which are sometimes called cooking bananas. Plantains look just like bananas but taste more like squash or potatoes. They are often used in Latin American cooking.

Some of the fun varieties of bananas that you might find in your local grocery store are:

Cavendish Bananas - This variety is America's favorite. It is the commercial variety that is always available in your local supermarket. Bobby Banana is a Cavendish banana.

Dwarf or Finger Bananas – These are small, sweeter versions of the Cavendish.

Apple Bananas – Apple bananas are short plump bananas with an apple after-taste, which many people love.

Red Bananas – These short, chunky bananas have red skin that starts to turn purple when they are ripe. Red bananas are very sweet and creamy.

Plantains – Plantains are very large green starchy fruits that are typically cooked and served like vegetables or potatoes.

Nutrients

- High in vitamin B₆
- A good source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber