



Banana Varieties



Most of us think that a banana is a banana and they are all pretty much the same! But, did you know that there are over 500 [some say 800] different varieties of banana in the world?

They come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colours and textures. Some of them are variations on our current everyday favourite and some taste completely different. And with many of these more exotic bananas, it pays to be patient! For best taste and mouth feel you need to give them enough time to ripen so you can fully realise their delicious differences.

Broadly speaking bananas can be divided into 2 groups – Dessert (sweet) bananas and Vegetable (savoury) bananas.

Dessert Bananas:

Cavendish: This is the banana variety that Europe is most familiar with. It's Europe's most popular fruit and is eaten fresh as well as in smoothies, yogurts and cakes. It can even add a bit of sweetness to a savoury dish. When yellow with green tips, the Cavendish banana has a lovely, well balanced sweetness and texture. Interestingly, our research highlights that we all have different preferences! Whilst 62% of people like them like this the other 38% either like them greener, firmer and less sweet, or really yellow with brown spots (these spots are the natural sweetness bursting out!). Just as well then that there's a banana for every taste!

Creamily sweet Reds: Red bananas are short, soft, and sweet, with a hint of raspberry flavor. A red banana is similar to other bananas except that its creamy coloured fruit is packed with extra vitamin C and beta-carotene, which converts into the essential nutrient, vitamin A. You can take them home when they're red, but let them ripen at room temperature until they are soft to the touch – a bit softer than most of us would eat a standard yellow banana - and have a maroon or purple/brown skin. Then simply enjoy the creamy sweetness! They are great as a snack, with ice-cream as a dessert, or even in savoury dishes!

Intensely sweet Babies: They may be small, but they pack a lot of natural sweetness under their thin, bright skins. For the record, these are not simply

'small bananas', but a different variety with a unique taste and texture – some people even say they taste of cookie dough! Store them at room temperature when you take them home and try to be patient! Once they are soft to the touch and their skin has started to reveal brown speckles/spots, they're at their sweetest and are ready to enjoy. Since a baby banana is only a 1/3 the size of a regular banana, they're a perfect snack for kids! Baby bananas can be eaten alone or used in smoothies, baby food, cakes, and other desserts that need a little extra natural sweetness.

Delicately Apple Manzanos ("apple banana"): The best way to enjoy them is when their thin skin is almost black – eat them straight from the skin as a snack or cooked in desserts. A Manzano has all of the sweetness of a regular banana with a distinctive hint of apple flavor. It's deliciously different and a good source of fiber, potassium, and vitamin C. Be sure to keep it at room temperature until it's very soft to the touch and has lots of brown sugar spots (otherwise it might taste starchy). Eat it on its own, use it in salty meals, or add it to cakes and desserts.

Fabulously Fruity Prata: Are Brazil's favourite banana. They are amazing and best eaten when brown and even a little scruffy looking! They look like a standard yellow banana, though perhaps a little squarer in shape, but they taste dramatically different. Some say they taste of kiwi fruit and others say there's a hint of citrus, but everyone finds them surprisingly different and totally delicious! In Brazil they say that the Pratas have been blessed by the banana fairy. We can't confirm that, but we know they taste great!

Vegetable Bananas:

The name says it all. The plantain – actually cousin to the dessert banana and not from the same genus - is also called the "potato of the tropics'. It is usually cooked before being eaten and in many African and Latin American countries it is a staple food. In Europe, demand is growing rapidly as people recognise the versatility of this fabulous food.

Our plantains are grown in Colombia and are ripe when the skin is brown or even black. They can taste sweet or starchy depending on their ripeness. In fact, it is a tasty alternative to potatoes, rice, or pasta.

They also make fabulous chips!