

Bananas, Bananas

World History

Started as a domestic crop around 6000 years ago by farmers in Southeast Asia. Bananas as a domesticated fruit appeared next in Africa around the 1st century. Banana plantations existed in China 3rd century. Literature from the Middle East mentions domesticated bananas by the 9th century. The first banana plantations in the Western Hemisphere were created in Brazil, the Caribbean Islands and Central America in 16th century.

American History

The banana did not become a popular fruit in America until the price became affordable to consumers in the 1870's. Chiquita Brands International and Dole used a combination of modern refrigeration, steamships, and railroads that to prevent bananas imported from Central America from spoiling. These two corporations control the growing, processing, shipping, and marketing of most bananas in the world today.

Nutritional Value

Bananas are a very good source of fiber. Many athletes consume bananas prior to working out because they contain potassium which may prevent muscle cramps. Almost 100 percent fat free, bananas do not contain saturated fat, cholesterol or sodium. Vitamins B1,B2,B3,B6 and C are found in each banana. Although sweet tasting bananas have a low sugar impact compared to many other foods.

Consumption

Bananas are the number one consumed fruit in the world. They make up a large portion of the daily calories consumed in parts of Africa and Asia. Over 85 percent of all bananas are consumed by local populations. Americans consume more bananas than apples and oranges combined. Since they are a non-seasonal crop they are available year round for production and consumption. Uganda has the distinction of being the largest per capita consumer of bananas at 1.5 pounds per day per person.

Varieties

There are over 1,000 types of bananas that grow wild or on plantations through out the tropical parts of the world. Their skins come in green, brown, yellow, purple or red. One example is the Manzano variety of banana which has a sweet apple-strawberry flavor. Plantains are a starchy banana popular in Latin America, India, Africa and Asia that is usually cooked before eaten. The Cavendish is a yellow skinned semi-sweet variety which is the most popular in America and makes up about 47 percent of all bananas produced in the world today.

