

Extension

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Newsletter

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For the Love of Bananas

Sheila Gains, Family & Consumer Science Agent, Arapahoe County

Easy to eat and digest, bananas are one of the first fruits children learn to eat and enjoy. Bananas are a good source of potassium, fiber, manganese, vitamins B6, C and A. Fiber helps you feel full longer and helps maintain regular/soft bowel movements. Potassium and manganese help control blood pressure and heart function. Potassium has also been shown to prevent muscle cramps and reduce your risk for kidney stones.

Purchasing:

Select bananas that are bright yellow for eating right away. Buy bananas that are pale yellow with green tips for eating a few days from now. Bananas ripen at room temperature over a period of 1 to 3 days. Some people like to eat bananas that are bright yellow with a few brown speckles on the peel, indicating the sugar content and flavor are at the highest. Other people prefer a pale yellow skin with no brown speckles, with a less intense banana flavor and firmer flesh.

Storage:

Ripe bananas can be kept at room temperature for a few days before becoming over-ripe. Bananas bruise easily so treat them kindly by hanging them by their connected stems or placing them upside down on the counter so that their stems and tips touch the counter instead on the delicate outer curve of the banana.

Once ripened to the degree you like, either enjoy or refrigerate for additional 2-3 days. The skin of bananas will turn brown in the refrigerator but the flesh will stay cream colored. Do not refrigerate before they are ripe, because they will not ripen properly.

Ripe bananas can be frozen and used in baked goods or smoothies later. If freezing for use in smoothies peel the fruit, cut into 1-2 inch pieces and freeze in a freezer bag or container. If freezing for a baked product you can freeze bananas as you would for smoothies or freeze whole with the peel on. The peel will turn black in the freezer, but the inside will be fine. Thaw whole bananas in the fridge or microwave and peel, slipping the flesh in to a bowl for mashing before adding to your recipe.

Uses: Bananas can be eaten raw or cooked. A few examples of their many uses include using them as an ingredient in smoothies, baked goods, desserts, or sliced on top of cereal, toast or pancakes.



Let's Talk

Most children love the sweet taste and creamy texture of bananas. It is a familiar food that is easily accepted eaten plain or prepared in a variety of ways. If this is the situation with your children, consider using bananas to help children discover foods that might be new to them. For example add ½ grated carrots, beets or zucchini squash to the banana muffin recipe below.

Food Safety Tip

Always rinse bananas under cool running water just before peeling. Wash hands & food preparation equipment & surface before preparing food.

Recipe for Health: Crunchy Banana Oat Muffins

2 ripe mashed bananas (about ¾ cup when mashed)
1 egg
½ cup milk
¼ cup honey (or 1/3 cup sugar + 1 Tablespoon liquid)
2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
½ grated vegetables, optional (carrot, zucchini squash, beet)
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup whole wheat flour
½ cup quick-cooking oatmeal
1 ¾ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
1 Tablespoon oatmeal

Preheat oven to 375° F.

In a large bowl combine mashed bananas, egg, milk, honey or sugar, oil, grated vegetable (optional) and vanilla and set aside. In

another bowl combine flour, ½ cup oatmeal, baking powder and salt. Stir flour mixture into banana mixture until they are just combined. Spray muffin pan with nonstick spray. Divide batter into 12 muffin cups (1/4-1/3 cup per muffin). Sprinkle the top of each cup with the remaining oatmeal. Bake 15- 18 minutes. Remove muffins from pan place on a cooling rack for



10-15 minutes. Muffins can be stored covered at room temperature for up to three days, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or frozen for up to 1 year. Get children involved in the mashing of bananas, cracking an egg, measuring and mixing ingredients and sprinkling oatmeal on top.

Five ingredient Banana Oatmeal Cookies

Vegan, Fat & Gluten Free, no added sugar

2 very ripe bananas, peeled
1 cup quick oatmeal (gluten free)
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon vanilla
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup raisins

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F

In a medium bowl mash bananas until mostly smooth. Add oats, cinnamon, vanilla, salt and raisins. Mix well. Drop rounded tablespoons of mixture onto a lightly sprayed cookie sheet. Flatten mounds with a fork or back of oiled spatula.

Bake 18 – 20 minutes. Remove from pan and let cool before serving. Refrigerate leftovers. Makes approximately 14 cookies.



Adapted from Food Hero, Oregon State University