

Consider the banana

Description

Consider the banana. Many people eat one nearly every day. It is considered one of the essential fruits in our North American diet. If you checked the facts, it comes right up there with blackberries and apples for amount of potassium and fiber. A lot of us sporty people eat bananas because of the potassium, but it is not on a list of items we could almost as



TOP 10 POTASSIUM FOODS	
1	Avocado 1100 mg (20% DV) 1/2 AVOCADO
2	Sweet Potato 900 mg (20% DV) 1 MEDIUM
3	Acorn Squash 890 mg (20% DV) 1 CUP
4	Spinach 890 mg (20% DV) 1 CUP
5	Dried Apricots 790 mg (20% DV) 1/2 CUP
6	Coconut Water 680 mg (20% DV) 1 CUP
7	Kefir or Yogurt 570 mg (20% DV) 1 CUP
8	White Beans 560 mg (20% DV) 1/2 CUP
9	Mushrooms 490 mg (20% DV) 1 CUP
10	Banana 422 mg (20% DV) 1 BANANA

easily eat to get that desired potassium. People who want to save money pick

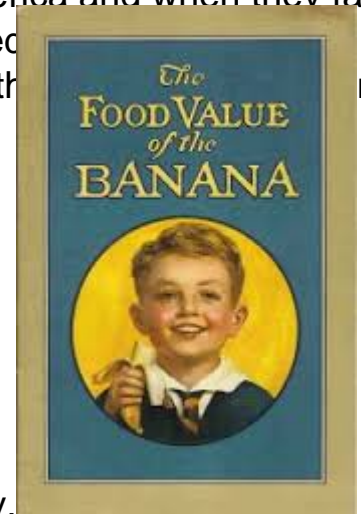
and choose which organic fruits and vegetables to buy. Bananas appear to be a bargain because they come with their own peel, a protection against all those bad things farmers do to plants to make them last longer and grow bigger, the GMO and pesticide business.



## The Politics of the Banana

I used to eat a banana every day until I gave it up as a protest against the military-industrial complex that undergirds capitalism. Here's why. Before going to Nicaragua a few years ago, I read the history of the [United Fruit Company](#). An innocent enough beginning: in 1870 a sea captain bought several bunches of bananas in Jamaica for a shilling and sold them for \$2 each in Jersey City. What a profit!

Over the next 100 years, the all pervasive import, distribution and marketing of bananas to a fruit-hungry northern population created a military-industrial joint enterprise that exploited Central American countries. Railroads were built in Central America and when they failed to make a profit from ridership, recovery of investment stimulated sales. An advertising campaign to promote eating bananas set the



went through ads that fuel the consumerism of Americans today.

During the 100 years from 1870 to 1970, the US government fought Spain for Cuba and Puerto Rico; took over the postal service of Honduras; ran the Nicaraguan government for a period of time. The US military engaged in operations against Panama, Dominican

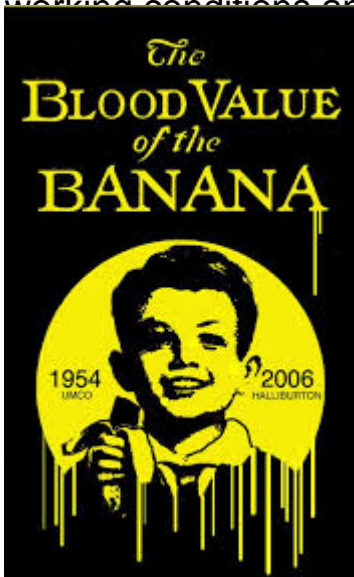
Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and El Salvador. The banana figured large in all these military activities.

Bananas were an exotic fruit highly susceptible to diseases.



to be abandoned. The workers lost their livelihood.

This prompted deals with local Latin American government officials to buy tracks of new land for new plantings. Every attempt by the Central American workers to get better working conditions and higher wages were met with resistance and sometimes, military force increased. Che Quevara and other leaders took to the streets. Government policy and action suppressed protests and



drove workers and their families toward what the US called

Communism, though probably unrelated to what was going on in Russia.

All this over the banana. I over-simplify. If you google banana, you have to search to find this [United Fruit Company history](#). Today we buy a strain of banana that is less perishable. The price is kept low. For a time there was no import tax at all even though countries fought for that lost revenue.

What struck me in reading the book was the power of advertising developed by the men desperate to market their crop. Over and over the owners of United Fruit had to recover terrible losses from the disease and from labor unrest. One step ahead of bankruptcy, they developed packets describing the value of the banana with maps of Central America and banana-laced recipes for elementary and junior high class room teachers. They discovered a way to dry over-ripe and damaged bananas and sell them to us as healthy snack food (dried banana chips are delicious!) We were hooked. We consumers learned to listen to “facts” about the value of a product to influence our buying habits and our taste buds. Just think about the effort chocolate makers have made to convince us that bitter dark chocolate is good for us as society began to reject milk chocolate as fattening and even addictive. Just notice how many ads on TV recommend foods and medicines.

Global marketing of fruit on a mass scale may have started with the banana. The *Slow food* and *Eat local* movements will probably not change the consumption of tropical fruit in North America. We’ve grown accustomed to it.

## Glycemic Index

Another reason to question the  
trying to control your weight, los

he Glycemic Index scale. If you are  
bat candida, you'll want to eat foods



with the lowest glycemic rating.

To review: The glycemic index (GI) is a ranking of carbohydrates on a scale from 0 to 100 according to the extent to which they raise blood sugar levels after eating. The banana is an OK choice, but there are better fruits and vegetables. The next time you go for a big workout, a hike or long run, throw an avocado and a spoon in your pack, split it open and eat it for potassium and fiber and good fat. A nice alternative.

I myself am a marketing person and offer a workout drink with banana in it: [Physique](#). Anyone who makes their living by selling something learns to find the sweet spot where the prospect and the product meet. As a society, we probably won't go back to an earlier time when exotic fruit cost a whole lot of money, like the day I asked my husband to buy me a peach and bring it to the hospital after our daughter was born. It was a cold January day in 1961. The peach came from Israel and cost, if I remember more or less, about \$5 which for two students with no income was exorbitant. We do rare things in rare moments.

Enjoy your delicious banana sliced on your bowl of cereal! I'll pass.

Questions? Comments? I'd love to hear from you on the subject of banana.

Be Well, Do Well and Keep Moving!

Betsy

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1. Be Well health tips

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