



How to Purchase & Store Bananas

Purchasing:

Yellow bananas are available year round. Other varieties may also be available in large supermarkets, but ethnic markets are the place to shop for the exotics. Hispanic, Philippine, and Thai markets offer more diversity. There you can find red bananas, burro bananas, plantains, and occasionally Lady Fingers. Select bananas that are slightly green, firm, and without bruises. If the bananas have a gray tint and a dull appearance, these have been refrigerated, preventing them from ripening properly.

Most people avoid purchasing plantains mainly because they do not know how to select them and what to do with them. Plantains can be purchased in any state of ripeness, from very green and firm to completely black and soft, but it is important to note that the very green ones will test your patience. Banana chips are available in most supermarkets. Because they are sometimes deep-fried in unhealthy oils, they are very high in calories. We recommend avoiding these or eating them only occasionally.

Storing:

Never store unripe bananas in the refrigerator! They simply will not ripen properly because the cold interferes with the ripening process. Bringing refrigerated bananas back to room temperature will not reverse the process. However, once bananas are ripe, they can be refrigerated for up to two weeks. Take note that their skins will turn black. Give yellow-green bananas time to ripen at room temperature to a sunny yellow color, from one to three days, or they will taste astringent and be difficult to digest.

Ripen plantains at room temperature. They may take up to three weeks to soften and ripen to a dull yellow color mottled with numerous black spots. Most fruits give off an ethylene gas in the process of ripening. Because bananas release a higher concentration of ethylene gas, they ripen quickly. If you've bought green bananas and want to accelerate the ripening, place them into a paper or plastic bag. Adding an apple to the bag will encourage faster ripening. To take advantage of very ripe bargain bananas, simply peel them, cut them into chunks, and wrap them in plastic. Tuck them into the freezer and use as needed for smoothies, or defrost and mash them for baking or making fruit sauces.