



All About Plantains

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Just by looking at a plantain it's easy to see that it's a member of the banana family. Plantains are a very common food in tropical climates all over the world such as South America, Southeast Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. While not quite as common in the U.S., they usually are available in most large grocery stores. Plantains are grown year round in these tropical climates, so they are available year round.

The flavor and texture of plantains change as they ripen. Green plantains are very starchy and potato-like. They are fairly hard and you may need a knife to peel them. Yellow plantains are slightly sweeter, softer and easier to peel, while black plantains are the sweetest and are typically baked and eaten as a dessert. Plantains are almost always cooked before eaten.

Just like bananas, leave plantains at room temperature to ripen. If you're following a recipe, make sure you are using the correct ripeness- it makes a huge difference!

Since plantains are a close relative of the banana, their nutrition benefits are very similar. Plantains are very rich in potassium, beta carotene, vitamin B6 and vitamin C and they are also a good source of fiber. A medium plantain has around 220 calories, 4 grams of fiber and 57 grams of carbohydrates.

Most plantain recipes you will find are traditional recipes from the areas I mentioned above, like tostones, or mangú. However, plantains are gaining in popularity in the U.S. thanks to the Paleo and gluten free communities. Plantains can be a great whole food, nutrient dense carbohydrate for meals. Just watch your portions, and know your body, because they are very carb dense.

So, what do you do with them?

Plantains can be steamed, baked, boiled, grilled, roasted, mashed or fried. They can also be used in soups and stews. Here are a few simple ideas to get you started if you've never cooked with plantains before:

- **Green Plantains:** [Baked Plantain Fries](#)
- **Yellow Plantains:** [Sweet Baked Plantains](#)
- **Black or Almost Black Plantains:** [Honey and Sea Salt Plantains](#) (dessert recipe)

If you feel a little more adventurous, there are a growing number of grain free waffle, tortilla, pancake and other "bread like" recipes using plantains (instead of flour):

- **Green Plantain:** [Flourless Waffle Bread](#)
- **Yellow Plantains:** [Plantain Tortillas](#)

Have you cooked with plantains before?