



All About Bananas



THE ORGANIC BOX NEWS

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This week we are featuring a non-local item: Fair Trade Organic Bananas. If only we could grow them here! Did you know that although there are between 500 to 1000 types of bananas grown in the world, 99% of bananas exported to North America and Europe are of a single variety called Cavendish? This is the banana you are familiar with: yellow, sweet, uniformly-sized and seedless.

Until the 1960s, however, the banana everyone loved was the Big Mike variety, which was larger and more flavourful than the one we eat now. This variety was wiped out by a fungus called Panama Disease, and the Cavendish was eventually accepted as a replacement.



In 1992, a new strain of a fungus that affects the Cavendish was discovered in Asia. This disease has since wiped out plantations throughout the world. It has not yet hit Africa or Latin America, but most experts agree that it will spread. After 15,000 years of human cultivation (almost no plant has been cultivated longer by humans), the banana lacks genetic diversity, and what kills one plant, kills them all. It may be that our children and grandchildren will not know the Cavendish but a different variety or even that bananas will be a luxury item. To learn more, there is an excellent article in Popular Science: www.popsci.com/scitech/article/2008-06/can-fruit-be-saved.

The majority of bananas are grown on large plantations owned and regulated by a few large multinational corporations. An average banana plantation in Central America uses 30 kilograms of pesticides per hectare each year. This had led to cases of contamination in local ecosystems and a range of health problems for workers.

The organic bananas in your Organic Box come from a farmers' cooperative called Bos Salitral (Bananeros Organicos Solidarios) in Peru. BOS formed in 2003 with the objective of promoting the development of small farmers of organic bananas.

What does Fair Trade mean? Small farmers' cooperatives and plantations like BOS that produce Fair Trade Certified bananas are guaranteed a minimum price to cover production, as well as a premium to invest in social and economic initiatives in their communities. Environmental standards restrict the use of agrochemicals and encourage sustainability. Fair Trade means direct trade relationships with the farmers; fair wages; equitable working conditions; and child labour under the age of 15 is prohibited. Learn more about Canada's Fair Trade programs at www.transfair.ca.

Fair Trade also means that we agree to purchase their bananas throughout the crop cycle. Although quality sometimes wanes for a week or two at the end of a crop, we protect the farmers by buying what they grow and always love when the new crop comes in! Does anything taste better than a chemical-free organic banana, not frozen in transport, and grown lovingly by small sustainable farms?

Did you know there are 7 stages in a ripening banana's shelf-life? One for each day of the week. From Stage 1, hard and green, to Stage 7, yellow with brown sugar spots. Stage 2 ½ bananas are shipped to The Organic Box. We then keep the bananas in our purpose-built 'banana room' at 12 degrees to control the ripening process before they arrive at your door. For storage at home, somewhere cool is best, but not in the fridge which is too cold.

Prairie Mill Bread Co. uses our bananas in their famous Banana Bread. You can buy Prairie Mill Banana Bread from The Organic Box!

Grilled Bananas with Coconut Caramel Sauce

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas
- -50 g coconut milk
- 25 g palm sugar
- 25 g honey
- 20 g unsalted butter
- pinch of salt



Preparation:

1. Peel the bananas, slice and skewer them.
2. Bring coconut milk, palm sugar and honey to a boil.
3. Add butter and salt. Simmer for 5 minutes, remove from heat.
4. Dip the bananas into the sauce, grill each side for 2-3 minutes.
5. Transfer the bananas to a plate, spoon more sauce on top.

Source: <http://www.namthip.com/2010/07/grilled-bananas.html>