

FRUIT/VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH!

Featured fruit is the **Banana**

BANANA FACTS:

The banana is a popular fruit enjoyed for breakfast, lunch or a snack. It is one of the most important fruit crops in the world.

Bananas were likely first domesticated in New Guinea, an island country near Australia. They are mentioned in early Greek, Latin and Arabic writings. Today, they are grown in tropical regions around the world.

There are over 110 different types of bananas varying in color, size and shape. "Banana" usually refers to the soft and sweet kind, also known as *dessert* bananas. Plantains are a type of banana that are firmer, starchier and are not eaten raw. They are cooked before eating.

Bananas make a great addition to yogurt, cereal and smoothies. Add mashed bananas to muffins, cookies and cakes for a naturally sweet flavor.



CHOCOLATE COVERED BANANA POPS RECIPE:

Prep: 20 mins Cook: 10 mins Total: 3 hrs 30 mins
Servings: 8

Ingredients:

- 4 medium ripe but firm bananas
- 8 wooden craft sticks
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped lightly salted peanuts (optional)
- 6 ounces of dark chocolate, about 1 cup chopped

Directions:

1. Peel, then cut each banana in half crosswise and insert a craft stick into each half. Place on a tray, cover with plastic wrap, and place in the freezer until frozen, about 3 hours.
2. Place the peanuts on a plate. Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler over slightly simmering water, frequently stirring over the lowest possible heat. Pour the melted chocolate into a tall glass. Dip each frozen banana into the chocolate, turning it to coat, and immediately roll in the peanuts. Serve immediately or wrap individually in plastic wrap or waxed paper and freeze for up to 2 weeks.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF EATING BANANAS:

- Can help **lower blood pressure** and keep blood pressure in a healthy range
- May **reduce the risk** of certain types of cancer
- Can help minimize constipation
- May aid weight loss by helping you feel full
- Can help improve memory and **delay mental decline**
- May help moderate blood sugar levels in healthy individuals (this might not apply in those who have type 2 diabetes)
- **Potassium** in bananas may improve kidney health
- Can help your muscles work better
- Bananas contain many important **nutrients and antioxidants**

