

# Health Benefits of Plantains



Plantains are a tropical fruit that have the appearance of bananas. But they are very different in flavor, texture and size. Plantains are much larger than bananas, less sweet and more starchy, similar to a potato. They are commonly used in Latin, Caribbean and African cuisines.

**Note** Although plantains may be eaten raw, they are usually cooked before consuming.

## WHAT MAKES PLANTAINS GREAT?

### Nutrition

1 cup cooked plantains provides 215 calories, 2 gm protein, 3 gm fiber, no fat and no cholesterol.

### Vitamins

Plantains contain vitamin C which is an age-fighting antioxidant that boosts immune function. Other antioxidants include alpha and beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin for eye health.

Folate in plantains helps with cell division and DNA production, and prevents neural tube defects in a growing fetus. Plantains also provide other B vitamins including niacin and trace amounts of riboflavin and thiamin.

Vitamin K from plantains helps with healthy blood clotting and bone formation. Choline is important in metabolism, brain development and in the making of neurotransmitters that regulate mood and memory.

### Minerals

Plantains are low in sodium and high in potassium to help regulate blood pressure. They provide magnesium and calcium for heart and bone health, and phosphorus, a key component of cell membranes and essential for energy production. They also provide trace amounts of copper, iron and zinc.

### Fiber

They are an excellent source of resistant starch, a type of fiber that controls blood sugars and improves gut health. Green plantains (less ripe) have slightly more fiber than yellow (more ripe).

## BUYING & USING PLANTAINS

Plantains are inexpensive and found in most stores year-round. They can be eaten at any point in the ripening process.

They are picked while still green and immature, with a strong ridge. As they ripen, they turn yellow and develop black spots similar to an overripe banana. The heavy ridge becomes more rounded and they get easier to peel.



Plantains that are yellow with black spots are softer and sweeter than green. As the starch converts to sugar, they will caramelize and soften when cooked.

To ripen faster, put plantains in a paper bag in a warm location until desired ripeness is achieved.

To prepare plantains, cut off a small section from both ends. Make a shallow slice through the skin along a ridge line with a sharp knife and peel off. The interior of a green plantain is firm and starchy. As it ripens, the skin softens, and they will have a softer interior.

Unlike bananas eaten raw as a dessert or snack, plantains are usually consumed like a vegetable, cooked and served with savory dishes. Plantains are typically boiled, baked or fried but can be simmered, grilled, mashed, microwaved or roasted. Green plantains can be used to thicken the broth of soups and stews as they cook.



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There are many ways to use plantains in your everyday cooking.

- Swap out potatoes for plantains in soups, stews and chili.
- Grate like rice and serve with aromatic spices.
- Bake or air fry to make chips and enjoy with dip, hummus or guacamole. Top plantain chips with pickled cabbage or kimchi.
- Add cooked plantain slices to sandwiches, burritos, tacos or layered in casseroles.
- Use baked plantains as a side dish with vegetables, beans, meat or fish.
- They can also be converted into flour and used in cakes, bread and pancakes.

## Caribbean Plantain Curry

thatgirlcookshealthy.com

### Ingredients:

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|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 yellow plantains, sliced and halved |                       |
| 1 med sweet potato, chopped           |                       |
| 1 can kidney beans                    |                       |
| 1 medium onion, chopped               | 1 cup water           |
| 2 scallion onions, chopped            | 2 Tbsp coconut oil    |
| 2 bell peppers, chopped               | 1-2 Tbsp curry powder |
| 2 cups coconut milk                   | 1 tsp black pepper    |
| 1½ cup raw spinach or kale            | 6 sprigs thyme        |
| 1 med tomato, chopped                 | 1 tsp coriander       |
| 4 cloves garlic, minced               | 1 tsp salt            |
| 1 Tbsp fresh ginger, grated           | 1 tsp allspice        |

### Directions:

1. In a large pot, melt coconut oil on low-medium heat. Add onion and garlic until soft.
2. Add peppers and ginger and cook about 5 minutes. Stir in all the spices and tomatoes and cook 2 minutes or until fragrant. Then add beans, sweet potato and plantain, coconut milk and water.
3. Bring pot to rolling boil. Cover and reduce heat to medium low. Simmer 25 minutes.
4. Carefully fold in spinach or kale and serve immediately. Instead, you could lay greens in the bottom of bowl or plate and ladle curry on top.

## Baked or Air-Fried Plantains

elavegan.com

### Ingredients:

- 2 ripe plantains (yellow)
- 1 Tbsp oil (canola, avocado, coconut, olive)
- Sea salt to taste

### Optional spices:

- Smoked paprika
- Onion or garlic powder
- Cumin, chili powder
- Curry powder

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Remove plantain peel. Slice diagonally into 1/3" thick slices.
3. Put oil in a large bowl with spices and toss plantain slices until covered.
4. Spread plantain in a single layer on baking sheet.
5. Bake 25-30 minutes until golden brown, flipping once. Or place in air fryer at 360°F for 10-15 minutes, flipping halfway.
6. Serve with ketchup, guacamole or BBQ sauce.

## Black Bean Plantain Bowl

minimalistbaker.com

### Ingredients:

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|--|---|
| 4 large yellow plantains, peeled, cut into 1/4" rounds | 4 cups rice or cauliflower rice, barley, cooked |
| 1½ Tbsp coconut oil                                    | 2 15-oz cans black beans with juice             |
| 1 pinch salt   | Ground cumin and chili powder are optional      |
| 3 cups finely shredded green or purple cabbage         | <b>Optional:</b>                                |
| 1 cup finely chopped green onion                       | Guacamole or avocado                            |
|  | Chopped cilantro                                |
|  | Salsa or beet relish                            |

### Directions:

1. Prepare rice or barley. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Toss plantains with oil and spread in a single layer on baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt. Bake 10-15 minutes until golden brown.
3. In the meantime, warm beans in microwave or stovetop. Add cumin or chili powder if desired.
4. Prepare slaw by mixing shredded cabbage and green onion.
5. To serve, layer rice, beans, plantains and slaw. Top with avocado, cilantro or lime wedges.

## REFERENCES

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