

# The Banana... Possibly the World's Most Perfect Fruit

*By John Rizzo*

It comes in its own wrapper, loaded with nutrients; appealing to both the young and old, and above all it's quite delicious. Dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, the banana traces its origin to the region of Malaysia. It was Alexander the Great, who in 327 BC, is credited with the first leg of its long journey to the Western World. By way of the Portuguese in the 1500's, the banana found its way throughout the Caribbean Islands. It wasn't until 1876 when the banana first arrived in the United States; selling at a Centennial celebration in Pennsylvania for ten cents each.

When purchasing bananas, they should be slightly green, blemish free and firm. Never buy bananas that are gray-ing, for they were either improperly gassed or once refrigerated. They will never correctly ripen. Storing your bananas depends on when you want to eat them. To quickly ripen, place them in a warm and humid location. They can also be placed in a bag with an apple; the ethylene gas released from the apple will quickly ripen the banana. Once ripened, they can be stored in the refrigerator to slow down their decay; although the skin will turn black, the fruit will still eat well. Bananas can be frozen right in their skin to be later used for breads, muffins and frozen fruit drinks.

From a nutritional standpoint, the banana is loaded with potassium, a mineral that helps build muscles, metabolize protein and proven to reduce the risk of high blood pressure. In addition to potassium, the banana is also a good source of Vitamin C and dietary fiber, while also containing Vitamin A and protein.

A common misnomer about bananas is that they grow on trees; but in all actuality it's considered a plant. This makes the banana the world's largest herb. So to quote Paul Harvey: "and now you know the rest of the story".

## **Bananas Foster ings**

**Yield: 4-6 Serv-**

Peel bananas and cut in half lengthwise; then cut across into quarters. Set aside. Melt the butter into a heavy skillet. On low

Butter	1/4 Cup	Brown Sugar	1 Cup
Cinnamon	1/4 tsp.	Banana Liqueur	1/4 Cup
Bananas	4	Dark Rum	1/4 Cup
Orange Zest	1/2 tsp.		

heat, add the brown sugar and cinnamon; cook until the sugar dissolves and add the banana liqueur. Bring the sauce to a simmer and add the bananas; cook for approximately one minute while spooning the sauce over bananas throughout the process. Remove the bananas and hold them on your serving platter. Bring the sauce back to a boil and add the rum. If the sauce does not ignite, tilt the skillet back towards you and it may ignite then. If it has not ignited yet, use a small stick and carefully light the mixture. Cook until the flames die out, about one minute. (If you desire a thicker syrup; continue to simmer until it reaches your preference.) Add the orange zest and remove from heat; immediately pour the sauce over the bananas. Serve hot over ice cream, waffles or cake.