



# Bananas: An American History

*Virginia Scott Jenkins*

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Before 1880 most Americans had never seen a banana. By 1910 bananas were so common that streets were littered with their peels. Today Americans eat on average nearly seventy-five per year. More than a staple of the American diet, bananas have gained a secure place in the nation's culture and folklore. They have been recommended as the secret to longevity, the perfect food for infants, and the cure for warts, headaches, and stage fright. Essential to the cereal bowl and the pratfall, they remain a mainstay of jokes, songs, and wordplay even after a century of rapid change.

Covering every aspect of the banana in American culture, from its beginnings as luxury food to its reputation in the 1910s as the “poor man's” fruit to its role today as a healthy, easy-to-carry snack, *Bananas* provides an insightful look at a fruit with appeal.

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