

Banana Care & Handling

Ever “go bananas” when your bananas ripen too quickly, or come out of the box bruised and beaten up? How many times have you pulled bananas off of the counters because they look grey or old? I know as a young clerk back in the day I could never figure out why these things were happening, but soon realized that the produce department’s still undisputed commodity champion requires a bit more attention than other produce.

Proper care and handling of bananas is essential in keeping shrink to a minimum on this tropical favorite. Good, solid handling practices are foundations for banana sales and success, so let's take a look at how you can maximize your sales and profits and extend the shelf life of your fruit.



BACKROOM CARE

- Keep bananas away from warm docks or dock doors that allow heat into the storage areas. Excessive heat is not a friend of bananas, and with the warmer weather upon us, there should be an increased awareness on leaving fruit on and in warm dock areas.
- The practice of “air stacking” or “lidding” fruit is the best way to allow heat to escape and prevent the buildup of ethylene in your boxes. For more information on how to do this, follow this link: http://y2u.be/a_121UgiMTA
- Never store bananas in or around your coolers. Keep away from the cold drafts as these have the potential to produce “chilled fruit”. Fruit exposed to temperatures below 50 degrees, even as little as 10 minutes, is subject to chill damage. Chilled fruit will often times show grey coloring along the fingers. It is important to know that chilled fruit has no effect on quality of the fruit. Outward appearance however does suffer, thus potentially deterring customers from purchasing. The ideal temperature for storing bananas is 55-58 degrees
- Store bananas away from other commodities that produce ethylene. Apples, tomatoes, mangoes, avocados and some stone fruit all produce the gas and increases the ripening of bananas.
- Never throw or drop banana cases onto racking or tables. This increases the chance for bruising of the fruit, especially on the bottom layers.

ORDERING

- Identify your needs and project for a couple days of sales, planning ahead for desired color stages. For the best sales results, it is a good practice to offer both ripe and unripe fruit so having an in store ripening program would help you manage the color. Consumers will often buy fruit for immediate consumption and some for future enjoyment. You can reference the following sheet for the stages of banana colors.



COUNTER CARE

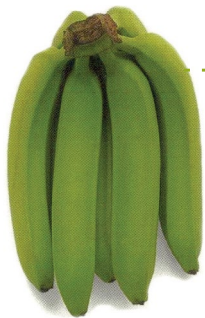
- Be sure to offer both organic and conventionally grown fruit.
- Never stack bananas higher than two rows. The excess weight of the fruit on top will bruise the bottom layers.
- The “first in, first out” rule does not apply when it comes to bananas. Rotation/packout should be done based on ripeness and color ratio.
- Cull and remove any bad bananas that might be on the hands.
- Offer other varieties of bananas when available such as nino (baby) red bananas and plantains.
- Cross merchandising other tropical fruit such as mangoes, kiwi, papaya and avocados will add impulse sales to the category.
- For fruit that might be overripe, it’s a great idea to band/PLU or bag up to sell at a reduced price per pound. These bananas are great for smoothies and for making good old fashioned banana bread!



EQUAL EXCHANGE
**ORGANIC
BANANAS**



RIPENING STAGES



STAGE 2
Light Green
The first color change in the ripening cycle.



STAGE 3
**Half Green
Half Yellow**
Firm and ideal for shipping to retail.



STAGE 4
**More Yellow
than Green**
Ideal for retail display.



STAGE 5
**Yellow with
Green Tips**
Maximum ripeness desirable for retail display.



STAGE 6
Full Yellow
Ideal for consumer use.



STAGE 7
**Yellow with
Brown Spots**
Completely ripe, sweetest flavor.

**SMALL BIG
FARMERS. CHANGE.**

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