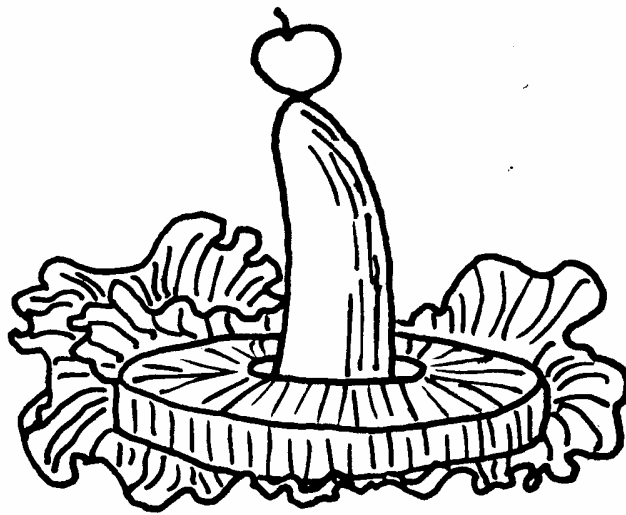


The Candle Salad Story



By Carolyn Andrew Lynch
April, 2003

The Candle Salad Story

You never know when you might need the recipe for this salad. To make it, place a lettuce leaf on one of your nicest plates. Mother used her American Fostoria plates, and that is what you see in the photo. On the center of this place a ring of pineapple. Next cut a banana in half (the short way) and stick the flat end in the center of the pineapple ring. On top of the banana goes a dollop of mayonnaise representing melting wax and, for the finale, place a maraschino cherry on the very top for flame.



Alice demonstrating the correct way to make this festive salad for Christmas dinner in the kitchen in my house in Maquoketa (c 1952).

Left to right: Alice, Carolyn, Mom, and Grandma

Had I not uncovered this photo, there would have been no story to tell. However, in 1991 this photo surfaced and I included it in the book I was writing, *Mom's Tales of the Olden Days*. Several friends joined me at my Dewey Beach, DE, house early in September, 1992, for some quilting fun, and I had a copy of my story with me. Ellen Swanson wanted to read it and I was happy to let her do so. When she got to this photo of the candle salad she chuckled with delight because she remembered making the same salad when she was a child growing up in Michigan. She was inspired to begin writing her own story of growing up and we had quite a discussion about how to go about it.

Ellen was experiencing severe back pains at the time and shortly after returning to her home in Hamilton, VA, she got it checked out. After an examination revealed that she

had a malignant tumor in her spine that had gone way past the stage of being treated successfully, she began to get her affairs in order. Her children, who were in their twenties, joined her at Thanksgiving. Knowing that they never had been served the salad, and that they all needed a break in the tension due to her illness, she served it to them with all the pomp that it deserved. Their reactions were what you would expect from our not-so-naive generation of young people. It was a fun and happy time, considering the fact that she was using Hospice care by that time and needed assistance from another of our friends, Nancy Johnson, to pull it off.

The impact of that goofy salad was greater than you could imagine. It was an important part of the eulogy her brother gave at her funeral in early February. It was described as one of the best, most joyful experiences she had during her illness. At this point in her services, about twelve of us, her closest friends, laughed out loud.

A few months after Ellen's death, her group of friends met for our annual quilting retreat at Capon Springs, WVA. Someone had the idea that we should each make a quilt block depicting the salad, which a few of them did. Nancy Johnson recalls that weekend: "Now THAT time I remember well--all those "proper" people that came in to see what we were doing and we tried to keep straight faces when we were nearly bursting with laughter--what fun!"

I wasn't interested in this project at the time and the small collection of blocks ended up with Mary Ann Rush. They sat around at her house for a few years. Mary Ann had had rheumatic fever as a child and as a result had a severely damaged heart valve requiring surgery. Before the surgery she gave me the candle salad blocks to do with as I wished. She died shortly after surgery. Another enthusiastic contributor to the quilt, Lenore Parham, made a wonderful block for it and a short time later was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Watching the development of the quilt gave her something to chuckle about. Pat Gallagher died while the quilt was in the planning stages, but her wit, irreverent sense of humor, and moral support kept me going.

Within a few weeks after each service and by popular demand, the good friends of those involved had a candle salad luncheon to celebrate friendship. We laughed and told stories about our dearly departed friends and how much they would have loved to be with us. It is so good to remember Ellen, Lenore, Mary Ann, and Pat in such a happy way. At such times I have happy thoughts about my mother, her sisters and my Grandma as well.

After inheriting the small collection of blocks from Mary Ann, I put in a plea from anyone who might be interested for more blocks depicting this unique dish. Friends from my Quilter's Dozen Bee, my Dirty Dozen Bee, my YoYo quilter's online book group, and my sister, Dorothy, kindly contributed. The candle salad quilt was finally completed in 2000.

**Ode to a Candle Salad, by Carolyn Lynch and friends,
Completed in 2000***



The second block up from the lower left corner has a tombstone designed by Barbara Bockman, complete with a hand of bananas in place of flowers. The epitaph, thought to be from an old tombstone in New England, is this:

“Here lies the body of our Anna
Done to death by a banana
It wasn’t the fruit that dealt the blow
But the skin of the thing that made her go.”

*A list of contributors to the quilt can be found at the end of this story.

Recipe Variations

The recipe, as my relatives prepared it, is not the only version of this festive dish. The oldest recipe I have found is from *Good Meals and How to Prepare Them, A Guide to Meal-Planning Cooking and Serving*, by Katharine A. Fisher, Director, Good Housekeeping Institute, copyright, 1927 by International Magazine Company, Inc, NY, NY, third Edition:

CANDLESTICK SALAD, INDIVIDUAL

1 slice canned pine- apple	Shredded coconut
½ banana, cut cross- wise	Strip green pepper
	Maraschino cherry
	Fruit salad dressing
	Lettuce

For the base of the candlestick, place the slice of pineapple on a leaf of lettuce and surround with fruit salad dressing piped through a pastry tube. For the candlestick, point the cut end of the banana half and place it in an upright position in the cavity of the pineapple slice. In the side of the banana stick the strip of green pepper to simulate the handle. On the top of the banana place the maraschino cherry or a strawberry, keeping it in position with a toothpick. Stick a piece of shredded coconut in the cherry for a wick. Serve additional salad dressing in tiny bonbon dishes at each plate. Serves one.

Another version appears in *From Square Meals*, by Jane and Michael Stern, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984. “*This is a book of taste thrills of only yesterday, from Mom’s best pot roast and tuna noodle casserole to ladies’ lunch and the perfect living room luau.*”

CANDLELIGHT SALAD

The most notorious of all the affectations of feminine dining, repudiated by sophisticated cooks as tasteless and spurious, Candlelight Salad is a paradigm of *cunning* cuisine. For each serving:

1 slice canned pineapple	Shred of coconut and pimiento bit
1 thick, short banana	Lettuce for garnish
Mayonnaise	

- Set pineapple slice on individual salad plate. Cut off top of banana so it will stand in the hole in the center of the pineapple slice. Dribble a tad of mayonnaise atop the banana candle to simulate wax. Insert coconut and pimiento in mayonnaise at top to simulate wick and fire.

This salad was frequently used among children’s groups like the Girl Scouts and 4-H classes and church youth groups during the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was so popular it was included in *Betty Crocker’s Cook Book for Boys and Girls*, by Simon and Schuster, New York, 1957. Following are scans of both the cover of that book and the actual recipe.

Betty Crocker's 

COOK BOOK

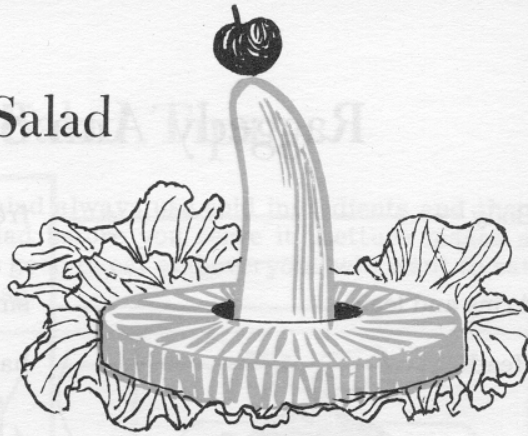
for Boys and Girls



This is the way the salad appeared in the *Betty Crocker Cook Book for Boys and Girls* in 1957

126 LUNCH salads

Candle Salad



It's better than a real candle, because you can eat it.

Place crisp lettuce leaf on plate.

For candle base use _____

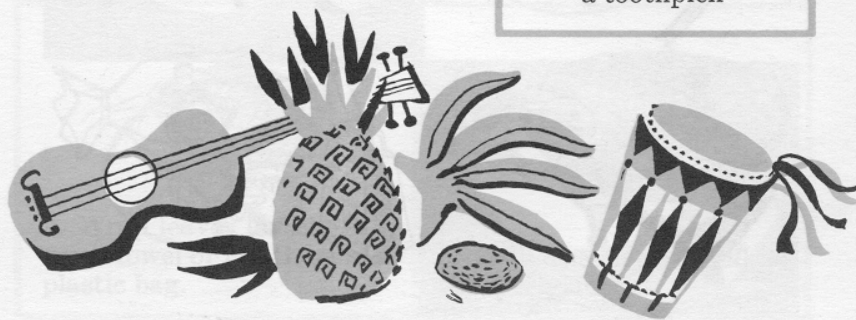
1 slice pineapple

The candle is _____

$\frac{1}{2}$ banana set
upright in
center of
pineapple slice


The flame is _____

1 maraschino
cherry,
fastened on top
of banana with
a toothpick



A later version of the cookbook, renamed *Betty Crocker's New Boys and Girls Cookbook*, took advantage of the emerging space program and renamed the salad the Rocket Salad.

fruit SALADS 57



Rocket Salad

For each serving, place a crisp lettuce leaf on a salad plate.

Launching pad

1 slice pineapple

Rocket

½ peeled banana set upright in center of pineapple slice

Nose cone

½ maraschino cherry fastened to top of banana with a toothpick

My sister, Dorothy, was reading about The Elongated Yellow Fruit School of Writing. The message seems to be: A banana is a banana, not an elongated yellow fruit. Don't complicate things.




CHRISTMAS CANDLE SALAD

1½ envelopes (1½ tablespoons)
unflavored gelatine
½ cup cold water
2 cups canned cranberry juice cocktail

4 bananas
8 salted almonds
Mayonnaise
Salad greens

Soften gelatine in cold water. Heat cranberry juice cocktail to boiling; add to gelatine; stir until gelatine dissolves. Pour into 8 small, lightly oiled, star-shaped molds. Chill until firm. Unmold. Cut small circle from center of each star. Peel bananas and cut in halves crosswise. Insert ½ banana in each star as shown. Top each "candle" with salted almond for "flame." Add a little mayonnaise to look like melted wax. Serve on salad greens with additional mayonnaise. Makes 8 servings.

During Christmas, 1997, the Annandale Giant grocery store, featured it as a holiday special for children.



Kids' Corner

Healthy Start
FOOD TO GROW ON

Fruits **JANUARY 1996**

Activities Recommended for children 2-6 years old

This activity developed by Giant Food Inc. & printed by **Dole**
Activity includes a reward! See back for details.

GIANT
THE QUALITY FOOD PEOPLE

Healthy Start...Food To Grow On is an information and education campaign for children that promotes healthful food choices and eating habits as a part of an overall healthful lifestyle. The program is for families with young children ages 2-6 years old. Look for these activity sheets in the Kid's Corner display in your Giant every month.

PARENT TIPS:

FRUIT IS A Winner!

Fruit...

is a food group all by itself. At least 2 servings a day are recommended. Eat it raw or cooked.

is sweet and juicy and most kids like it. Keep it handy. Encourage fruit for snacks and desserts. Include it as part of your meals too. Try our candle salad as part of lunch, dinner or as a fun snack.

doesn't have to be fresh to be good. Frozen fruit and canned fruits are handy and easy and just as nutritious as fresh. Pop-up cans of fruit are kid-size portioned. Use them in lunches and for snacks.

is a good source of vitamins, minerals and fiber. Fibrous fruits include oranges and grapefruit, fruits with seeds like berries and kiwi and fruits with peels like apples and pears. Citrus fruits are outstanding sources of Vitamin C, cantaloupe, peaches and apricots offer Vitamin A. Almost all fruits contribute potassium to the diet.

comes in different colors and different shapes. Have your pre-schooler sort fruits by colors and shapes. Feel the different textures - some fruits are bumpy and some are smooth, while another is fuzzy.

is available all year, thanks to the ability to quickly ship and distribute produce from around the world to stores. But your best bargains and best quality tend to be in seasonal fruit. Look for oranges and grapefruit in the winter, apples in the fall, strawberries in the spring, melons, peaches, and plums in the summer.



Recipe:

Candle Salad



"Light" up a winter day with this candle salad!

Ingredients

- pineapple slices • bananas, cut in half
- apple slices, cut in half • lettuce leaves

CHILD & ADULT Wash lettuce leaves and apples. Peel bananas and cut in half crosswise with a table knife.

ADULT: Drain pineapple slices, make thin apple slices. Cut not a tip of banana for apple slice.

CHILD: Put salads together

For each salad:

- 1 slice pineapple for base,
- ½ banana set upright in center of pineapple slice for candle
- ½ apple slice for flame



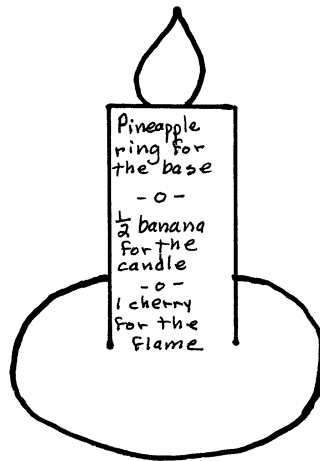
A Letter to Parents:

This letter was sent home with my granddaughters when they were attending preschool in McLean, VA, in early December 1997:

Dear Parents,

This week we will talk about the holiday of Hanukkah. A chance to introduce another holiday celebration for this time of year and time to enhance those imitating verbalization skill by adding a new word to some of our vocabularies.

Candles therefore will be big this week as we place a different colored candle (enhancing color recognition) on our menorah at circle every morning. We will closely watch the menorah on the Hilton Hotel building opposite our school. Every day they light a candle for the eight days of Hanukkah. Continuing on candles we will have fun making “food candles,” not only do they *manipulate those fine motor skills but also they taste yummy.*



In The Secret Life of Bees, by Sue Monk Kidd, Penguin Books, 2002, page 120, is the following quote:

“The best meal was lunch, which Zach and I ate under the cool of the pine trees. May fixed us bologna sandwiches nearly every single day. We could also count on candlestick salad, which meant half a banana standing up in a pineapple slice. “Let me light your candle,” she’d say, and strike an imaginary match. Then she’d fasten a bottled cherry on the tip of the banana with a toothpick. Like Zach and I were still in kindergarten. But we’d go along with her, acting all excited over her lighting the banana. For dessert we crunched cubes of lime Kool-Aid, which she’d frozen in ice trays.

Nancy's Retirement Party:

The candle salad was an important part of a retirement party for Nancy Johnson on April 30, 2001. She had been a staff member for Jinny Beyer's Quilt Symposium for many years and for many years was Ellen Swanson's best friend. The luncheon featured vertical foods, particularly bananas. No one was real happy that she was retiring. Note the quilt in the background.



Is that a banana
in your pocket or
are you just glad
to see me?

Anne Lamott, in her book, *Traveling Mercies, Some Thoughts on Faith*, Anchor books, 1999, describes the salad being a part of her bat mitzvah.

“I was taught some Hebrew scripture. I was told to memorize a recipe for Candle Salad, which was in a book called *The Jewish Home Beautiful*; on a leaf of lettuce, you put a ring of canned pineapple. Into its center, insert half a banana vertically. Secure part of an orange slice with a toothpick to the ring of pineapple, so the banana shouldn’t topple over, God forbid; and on top, for the flame, a maraschino cherry.”

Lenora Mattingly includes a wonderful description of the salad in *The Beany Malone Cookbook*, Weber Image Cascade Publishing, California, 1972.

Candlestick or Happy Birthday Salad (serves 8):

4 bananas	8 lettuce leaves
3 Tbsp powdered sugar	½ cup whipping cream
½ cup finely chopped nuts	1 cup mayonnaise
8 small birthday candles	8 slices pineapple
8 pretzels	

“Select firm and straight, rather than curved, bananas. Cut each banana in half crosswise. Mix the powdered sugar and nuts, and roll the banana halves in it. Drain the pineapple slices. Put each of the lettuce leaves on a small plate and place a slice of pineapple on top. Insert a banana half, the flat cut end down, in the center of each pineapple slice.

Whip the cream and fold it into the mayonnaise. Dribble a little of this mixture down the banana candles to look like melted wax. For the candlestick handle, press a pretzel against the side of the banana and into the pineapple slice as well, so that it will stay in place. Use the little birthday candles that come in rosebud holder and stick one into the top of each half-banana. Light them just before you bring in the salad and sing “Happy Birthday.” Serve the rest of the creamy mayonnaise with the salad.”

From Sylvia Lovegren’s *Fashionable Food*:

I received this note from Scott, the son of a college friend, Margaret Berg:

“This is from Sylvia Lovegren’s *Fashionable Food*, Chapter One, “The Twenties,” in-between “Alice Bradley’s Kitchenette Valentine Salad” and “Banana and Popcorn Salad.” “Miss Bradley’s hearts and hatchets met their match as edible sculpture in the notorious candlestick salad - a circle of sliced canned pineapple centered with an upright banana (the candle); a pimiento piece stood in for the flame and an artful dab of mayonnaise dripped down the side of the banana to represent melted wax. Men, however, were apt to make ribald comments about the salad’s likeness to more anatomical items, and candlestick salad was usually relegated to the strictly feminine luncheon.”]

A comment from Scott: “I always knew my great-grandparents’ generation was sick.

Greeting Cards:

In 1996 a package of greeting cards by “Life, Expressions of Life,” included one with this photograph by Lisa Larsen, Life Magazine, 1951. It was called “Kids Cooking Party.” Note the salads on the table.



A Popular Knock, Knock Joke:

Knock, knock. Who's there?
Banana. Banana who?
Knock, knock. Who's there?
Banana. Banana who?
Knock, Knock. Who's there?
Orange. Orange who?
Orange you glad I didn't say banana?

The Inn at Little Washington

My quilt, Ode to a Candle Salad, was shown at the Quilter's Unlimited Show in the spring of 2000. One of the most highly rated restaurants in the United States is the Inn at Little Washington in Washington, Virginia. After seeing my quilt in the show a friend, Eileen Culligan, gave me the December, 1999, holiday flyer from this prestigious restaurant. It is a beautifully presented eight page document featuring greetings, photos, menus, recommended wines for the Y2K celebration, and a two page story in the center called, "America Entertains." The article does not photocopy well because of the elaborate layered patterns on the paper. It was written by one of the owners, Patrick O'Connell, and includes a picture of his mother holding the salad.

America Entertains by Patrick O'Conner

"Growing up in a large, Irish Catholic family in the era of Ozzie and Harriet, I always assumed that the only reason people entertained was to have an incentive to clean their houses. My mother would begin scrubbing weeks before guests were scheduled to arrive, working room by room - sealing off each space after it passed the white glove test.

A path of newspapers would be laid down throughout the house and no one was allowed to step off it. The kitchen cabinets were emptied and scoured. All the canned goods and McCormick spices were washed, dried, and arranged alphabetically. On the last day of the countdown all the windows were washed inside and out and on the day of the party the bathroom was given a sterilized makeover, after which boys were instructed to use the woods until the company had left.

Monogrammed linen hand towels which no one ever used were hung on towel racks. Everybody, including the guests, understood that those linen towels weren't ever supposed to be touched. They were there to establish our rank in the social order of things. No one was ever surprised when they were returned to the linen closet unused after every party. My brother explained to me that men were supposed to use their socks to dry their hands but I was never 100 per cent clear what the women did. They were always so clever I suspected they carried a little towel in their purses for such occasions.

By the time all the children were either dressed and scrubbed or hidden and my mother had done her makeup, we were all wiped out - but that was one clean house. The arrival of the guests was totally anticlimactic. We couldn't wait for them to leave. We were always so exhausted. In my mother's circle, ladies would respond with a kind of coded message whenever they were invited over. They'd always say, "Now don't go to any fuss, dear." I learned to interpret that to mean that it wouldn't be necessary to repaint the house.

Party food of that era was also intended to look fussed-over. No matter how hard I try I will never be able to forget what today would be called my mother's "signature dish." It was called "Little Nancy Etticoat in Her White Petticoat," and was apparently inspired by

an obscure nursery rhyme about a candle. It was a banana coming straight up through a Dole pineapple ring surrounded by a chiffonade of iceberg lettuce, with a dollop of Hellmann's mayonnaise dripping down the sides, and capped off with a maraschino cherry - definitely a conversation stopper.

The Little Nancy salads already would be placed on the table before we sat down. Guests would stare with wide-eyed wonderment, never knowing quite what to say. One of the women obviously at a loss for words, but needing to fill the silence, would usually murmur, "Oh, Gwen!" (My mother's name is Gwendolyn.) That would be her cue to chime right in and recite the nursery rhyme: "Little Nancy Etticoat in her white petticoat. The longer she stands the shorter she grows." A respectful pause followed while the guests contemplated the best way of addressing the dish with knife and fork. For a small child whose chin barely reached the table, that salad had a rather haunting, larger-than-life aspect to it. Mysteriously, when my brothers and I began to reach puberty, the Little Nancy Etticoat salad disappeared from my mother's entertaining repertoire. All I can say is, that's a dish I've never had the guts to serve."

This story continues by detailing how to master the art of serving a good meal but there are no more references to the salad. Dorothy remembers the nursery rhyme as being a riddle that went: Question: Little Nancy Etticoat in her white petticoat and a red nose. The longer she stands, the shorter she grows. What am I? Answer: A candle.

I did, of course, send him a picture of my quilt and received a nice note in response. It was dated March 30, 2001, and says,

"Dear Carolyn,
Loved your letter. Those pictures are amazing! You've got to write an article or book on this "fascinating" dish and its history. So many people have accused me of having an over active imagination - not believing such a dish could have ever really existed. I can't wait to show your research to my mother --as well as the pictures.
Thanks for taking the time to share all this with me."

Warmest Regards, Patrick O'Conner

<p>Remember the banana. When it leaves the bunch it gets skinned.</p>

Have I Corrupted my Precious Grandchildren?

My grandchildren surprised me with the candle salad at our Thanksgiving, 2002 dinner at the Pflug's home. Karey remembers that I used to serve it with a dollop of cottage cheese on the side, so that is what they are adding. Left to right, top photo: Alison, Helen, Bill, and Emily



A Little History Lesson

After reading a little about the development of the banana industry, I have a better understanding of how the salad came to be. As late as 1890, bananas were exotic tropical plants in the US. Beginning about then, we became familiar with them in different ways. Some missionary groups brought back stories about bananas. The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition featured tropical plants including bananas that generated a lot of interest. Cookbooks, newspaper articles and advertisements carried stories about them. Bananas began to appear in grocery stores. There were many different varieties of bananas that looked slightly different from each other and there was something similar looking called with plantains. Housewives didn't know what to do with any of them.

They were grown in small amounts in Hawaii and Puerto Rico early in the 20th century. By 1926 the commercial production from Hawaii increased to 200,000 bunches annually. By 1946 bananas from Hawaii and Puerto Rico combined to amount to less than 1% of total banana imports. Central America is where they grew best and most of them came from there. There was, early in the 20th century, a prejudice against imports, so that didn't help their popularity.

Foreign markets began to open up. The United Fruit Company and later some other import companies were formed. There were many problems with the shipping, as bananas are highly perishable. They have to be picked green and require a carefully controlled temperature and humidity to ripen properly. There was the additional challenge of teaching people how to use them. Other problems also slowed the growth of the industry. The US tried to tax bananas and that caused an uproar. WWI slowed development, the depression in the 1930s was hard on the industry, there were big labor problems, and banana plant diseases became epidemic. Animals like tarantulas and poisonous snakes were frequent stowaways in shipments. WWII almost brought the import business to a halt. The ships that were being used for the banana business were diverted to use in the war effort. Bananas were rotting in the fields since they couldn't be shipped.

By 1946 the banana trains were rolling again. Imports rose, but diseases were still a problem. Varieties for commercial use had to be carefully selected and the use of insecticides increased. About this time, United Fruit was renamed Chiquita Brands International.

The term "Banana Republic" was coined around 1935 to describe a corrupt and hopeless puppet dictatorship in a country whose government was unduly influenced by the United Fruit and other importing companies.

During the early years, United Fruit was trying to promote the use of bananas by staging education programs. In 1923 bananas were called the perfect new food for the rising middle class. Fruit companies had plenty of advice and recipes to stimulate sales. In 1930 there was a big marketing campaign targeting children. There were instructions on

how to peel and cut bananas and how to tell when they are the right ripeness. In 1939 United Fruit Company's Home Economics Department produced a teacher's manual with the title: *A Study of the Banana: Its Every Day Use and Food Value*. In 1950 there was a big push by the industry calling bananas convenient, delicious and nutritious. All these programs included recipes for all sorts of ways to use them.

The "how to" publication on the next page came from the Home Economics Department of the Fruit Dispatch company, Pier 3, North River, New York City. It included lots of yummy sounding recipes for things like: Ham Banana Rolls, Banana Meat Loaf, Banana Rice Savory, Banana Scallops and Banana Fritters. The recipes each include advice as to how the skin should look before being used.



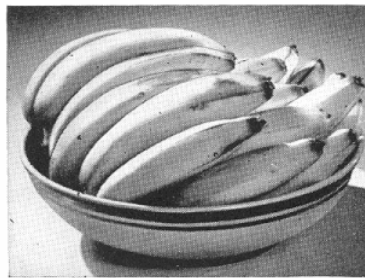
About 25 years ago on a Saturday Nite Live skit Dan Ackroyd, playing Dr. Freud, with Gilda Radner as his daughter, Anna, sitting on his lap telling him about her obviously sexual dream involving bananas and tunnels and smoking a cigarette, says the immortal words, "Sometimes a banana is just a banana, Anna."



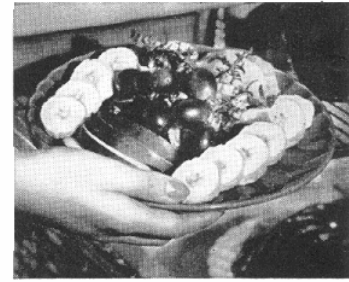
**DON'T SKIP THESE
"HOW-TO-DO-IT'S"**



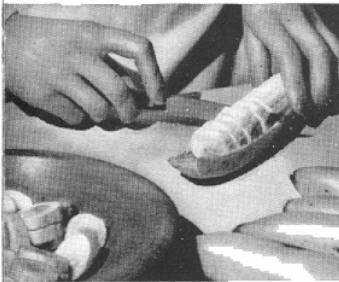
HOW TO BUY BANANAS—Buy bananas by the "hand" or cluster at the stage of ripeness you find them in the store. (They average about three bananas to a pound.)



HOW TO RIPEN BANANAS—Keep them in the fruit bowl at comfortable room temperature, not in the refrigerator. Cold temperatures prevent proper ripening.



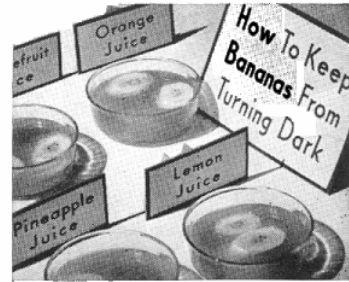
HOW TO COOL BANANAS—Just before serving, salads or fruit cups containing bananas may be placed in the refrigerator to cool.



HOW TO SLICE BANANAS—Slice bananas crosswise with a sharp knife unless directed in the recipe to slice them lengthwise or on the diagonal.



HOW TO FLUTE BANANAS—Run the prongs of a fork lengthwise down a peeled banana, then slice crosswise for dainty "crinkly-edged" rounds.



HOW TO KEEP sliced bananas from turning dark — Dip the slices into or sprinkle them with canned pineapple juice, fresh or canned grapefruit juice, orange or lemon juice.



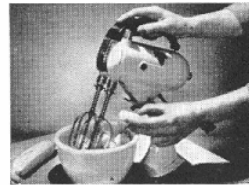
How to MASH BANANAS



1—Slice bananas into a bowl. Then beat with a fork. Or . . .



2—Slice bananas into a bowl. Beat with a rotary egg beater. Or . . .



3—Break bananas into chunks. Beat with an electric mixer. Or . . .



4—For the baby, press fully ripe banana through a fine mesh strainer with a spoon.

To keep *mashed bananas* from turning dark, mash them just before using.

In 1944 United Fruit, planning ahead for the return of its ships to the Caribbean banana trade at the end of the war, hired DK Browne (a cartoonist who later created Hagar the Horrible) to create a cartoon character based on the Latin American singer and movie star of the 1930s and 40s, Carmen Miranda. She was so popular that I even have a sister, Carmen, born in 1944 with a mop of black hair, who is named after the singing sensation! This cartoon character was called Chiquita Banana. She first appeared in a 1945 Technicolor movie ad with the title “Miss Chiquita Banana’s Beauty Treatment.”

She became part of an educational campaign to promote two things: Bananas taste better if eaten when their peels have brown spots; and bananas should be allowed to ripen at room temperature and “never in the refrigerator.” In this post war era many homes had a refrigerator for the first time and housewives were just learning to use them.

The Chiquita Song is one of the most famous advertising jingles ever written. It was created by an advertising agency team headed by Robert Foreman. He and his staff wrote the song on an old piano, shaking a box of paper clips to mimic the sounds of maracas. Garth Montgomery wrote the lyrics and Ken MacKenzie provided the music. The first singer to record the song was Patti Clayton, the first in a long line of Miss Chiquitas. At its peak, the song could be heard on the radio 376 times in one day.

The Chiquita Song
1945 by Shawnee Press, Inc

“I’m Chiquita Banana and I’ve come to say-
Bananas have to ripen in a certain way-
When they’re fleck’d with brown and have a golden hue-
Bananas taste the best and are best for you-
You can put them in a salad-
You can put them in a pie-aye-
Any way you want to eat them-
It’s impossible to beat them-
But, bananas like the climate of the very, very tropical equator-
So you should never put bananas in the refrigerator.”

1945 by Shawnee press, Inc

If you want to sing it, this is the tune. This is from the Chiquita banana website:
<http://www.chiquita.com/discover/osjingleb1.asp>

That Great Jingle



Cajun Arr. by *Chiquita*
Music by *Tommy*

I'm Chi - qui - ta Ba - na - na and I've
come to say ba - na - nas have to rip - en in a
cer - tain way. When they are fleck'd with brown and have a
gold - en hue, ba - na - nas taste the best, and are the
best for you. You can put them in a sa - lad
You can put them in a pie - aye
An - y way you want to eat them
It's im - pos - si - ble to beat them. But ba -
na - nas like the cli - mate of the ve - ry, ve - ry tra - pi - cal e -
qua - tor. So you should never put ba - na - nas
in the re - fri - ge - ra - tor

I have strong suspicions that the candle salad that my relatives were so proud of serving was the result of one of the banana industries promotional efforts in the 1940s. Mother and her sisters and dozens of cousins were all home economics majors at the University of Iowa during that period. They took domesticity seriously. They taught school, church, Girl Scout, 4-H troops, and family groups the basics of homemaking and were always on the lookout for good educational material. The advertising campaign through companies like United Fruit/Chiquita Banana spread throughout the United States.

A nice thing happens because of my quilt. It makes people smile. Some even laugh about it. There are even a few who don't "get it." Either you do or you don't! Goofiness is hard to explain. Of my many friends who remember it as children, we all are convinced that no one saw anything suggestive about it at that time. We all are big defenders of our innocent ancestors. WE might have dirty minds, but surely THEY never did. And it is all in our heads. There is nothing wrong with that sweet little salad. Even though the idea that something they were teaching their children to make had anything but the purest intent never entered their minds, I can see the smiles and hear the laughter of my Mother, Aunts and Grandmother even though they have all long since died. Grandma was, after all, a founding member of the First Christian Church of Iowa City, Iowa, and would have never considered allowing any impure thoughts in her family. What a treasured heritage!



She Who Laughs, Lasts

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Carolyn Proudly Serving the salad at one of her luncheons

Friends who made contributions to the quilt

Ode to a Candle Salad would never have been made had it not been for generous contributions from these friends. They will always be an important part of the story and my life. Judy Babb, Betty Jo Blagdon, Barbara Bockman, Bunny Corrough, Paul Dick, Mary Hartman, Louise Hayes, Judy House, Nancy Johnson, Brenda Jones, Kathryn Kuhn, Jane McDowell, Patti Marcus, Dot Martin, and Jeanne McBrayer, Jay Moody, Lenore Parham, Leslie Pfeifer, Gayle Ropp, Mary Ann Rush, Dorothy Stockwell, Bonnie Benn Stratton, Virginia Suzuki, Yoko Swanoboro, Nicole Verdant, Kathy Walsh, Ruth Wiggins, Terri Willett.

Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
Groucho Marks