Delicious and highly nutritious, they are prepared in various ways: steamed, baked, boiled, fried, served as chips, French fries, and so on. Bananas are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber, and are of great value as a food for children.

**BANANAS IN UGANDA**

Bananas are traditionally the major source of food in central, eastern, and parts of western Uganda. There are bananas suitable for cooking (e.g., gonja, kivuvu, and all of the varieties collectively referred to as matooke); for raw consumption (e.g., ndiizi and bogoya); and for making beverages (e.g., kayinja and kisubi). In addition to providing food security, bananas represent an important cultural heritage and have numerous local and traditional functions in the daily lives of many Ugandans. Bananas are generally harvested before they become fully ripe, when they contain more starch and less sugar.
The biodiversity of the banana genus, *Musa*, is truly extraordinary: There are about 50 varieties in Uganda (37 of which are presented in this book). It is smart to grow many varieties in a single garden as a defense against diseases and climatic shocks, and in order to target different markets and different consumers, with different tastes and preferences. Income from the sale of fresh bananas and various products derived from bananas helps raise the standard of living in rural communities.

It is vital to preserve this rich banana heritage, which is under threat from the introduction of a GMO “super banana” project.

Do not believe the banana lies:

- “Traditional bananas varieties will be destroyed by bacterial wilt.” But bacteria also attack hybrid varieties, and some traditional varieties are more resistant than others.
- “Traditional banana varieties are not nutritious.” But traditional varieties have fed people in Uganda for more than 1,000 years!
TERRA MADRE FOOD COMMUNITIES GROWING BANANAS

- Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium
- Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
- Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners
- Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners
NAKITEMBE
(BLACK AND RED)
KATWAALO
Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners
Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Commonly steamed in banana leaves, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

NAKITEMBE - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fruits are yellowish green, medium thick (as compared to kivuvu, for example), and less curvy than other varieties. There are two types of nakitembe, black and red: Black nakitembe trees have black stems, while red nakitembe have red stems.

LENGTH 10-15 cm

INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.
**Katwaalo - How to Recognize it**

**Outside**
- The yellowish-green fingers are short and crescent shaped.
- Length: 8 cm

**Inside**
- The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber.
- Mild and starchy.

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce. Once cooked, it tends to cool faster than nakitembe.
NDIBWABALANGIRA
Bugonya Kayinja Plantain

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce. It is traditionally consumed by people with high social status (chiefs and leaders of the Buganda Kingdom) and princesses.

**NDIBWABALANGIRA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

OUTSIDE It has long, straight fingers. The younger fingers have a bright green color that gradually becomes pale as the fruit matures.

LENGTH 15 cm

INSIDE The flesh is moist but firm, has a yellowish color, and, like other cooking bananas, is full of sap. It is a particularly sweet banana, which is one reason why it is traditionally served to the royal family.
NTIKA
OR TIKHA

EARTH MARKETS
MUZIRANNYAMA

NTIKA OR TIKHA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

**OUTSIDE** Silver green, slightly bent, with strong ribs.

**LENGTH** Over 15 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. It is as sweet as ndibwabalangira. Since it is processed green, this banana is sappy, moist, and firm.

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Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.
MUZIRANNYAMA
MUZIRANNYAMA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fingers are yellowish green, rather short and straight, and have no ribs.

LENGTH 8-10 cm

INSIDE The flesh is reddish white and has a waxy, slippery texture and a sappy smell. Mild and starchy.
MUSAKALA
MUSAKALA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fingers are curved, long, and yellowish green.

LENGTH 10-13 cm

INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. It contains a lot of sap even at full maturity. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.

Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium
Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.
NAMAHUMBO
**NAMAHUMBO - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

- **OUTSIDE** Smooth and green with visible ribs. The fingers form very compact clusters and the stigmas stay attached to the fingers until full maturity.
  - **LENGTH** 8 cm
  - **INSIDE** The flesh is cream colored and sappy. Mild and starchy.

It is a cooking banana.

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**SIIRA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

**OUTSIDE** Yellowish green, rather straight, no ribs at full maturity. Medium-sized.

**LENGTH** 8 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh has a coconut cream color.

Mild and starchy.

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- Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

It is prepared like other cooking varieties (steamed or boiled) but must be served immediately because it hardens once cooked.
Eaten steamed.

**MPOLOGOMOMA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

**OUTSIDE** Dark green, short and stocky.

**LENGTH** 8 cm

**INSIDE** It has yellow flesh and contains a lot of sticky sap. It smells like cucumber.
SOOLAGWESAZAALA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

**OUTSIDE** Slightly edged fingers in compact bunches. The name soolagwesazaala refers to the fact that its fingers are too small to nourish even a few people.

**LENGTH** 6 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh is sappy and has a coconut cream color. Mild and starchy.

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Eaten steamed.
NAKABULULULU
OR IMBULULULU
NAKABULULULU OR IMBULULU - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners
Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE This is a three-edged banana, silver green in color, with a short, back stigma.
length 12 cm
inside The flesh is cream-colored. Mild and starchy.
SITAKANGE
SITAKANGE - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE It is characterized by the fact that the fingers retain the black remains of the perianth, stigma, and style. The fingers are short and green, with blunt edges.

INSIDE The flesh is white, sappy and slippery but firm. Reminiscent of cucumber.

LENGTH 8 cm

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

It is characterized by the fact that the fingers retain the black remains of the perianth, stigma, and style. The fingers are short and green, with blunt edges.
ZIRUME OR MBWAZIRUME - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE Silver green.
LENGTH 8 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white, has a waxy texture, and contains a lot of milky sap. Mild and starchy.

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Eaten steamed.
MULWADDE TAYASAMA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fingers are light green and fairly straight.
LENGTH 15 cm
INSIDE Milky white flesh. Mild and starchy.

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Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
A green cooking banana, normally steamed.
EMBIDDE KABULA
EMBIDDE KABULA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE It is hard to distinguish from cooking bananas apart from its oval-shaped fingers and blunt tip.

LENGTH 7 cm

INSIDE Whitish-gray pulp and sap, characterized by its very bitter taste.

Always used for making juice and other beverages.
MUVUBO
OR MURULE
MUWUBO or MURULE – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE Dark green, long.
LENGTH 12-15 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white. Mild and starchy.

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Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners
Eaten steamed.
KISANSA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Outside: Gigantic, dark green, kayak-shaped fingers. Clusters are widely spaced. Maximum of six clusters per bunch.

Length: 15-20 cm

Inside: Freshly cut, the fruits are very sappy and stark white. Mild and starchy.

Commonly steamed in banana leaves, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

- Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium
- Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners
- Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
NABUSA
NABUSA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

**OUTSIDE** Medium-sized, yellowish green. It loses the black remains of the stigma. No ribs at full maturity. **LENGTH** up to 12 cm **INSIDE** It is yellowish with plenty of sap and smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.

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Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.
NAMWEZI
NAMWEZI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE There are no ribs once it is mature. The skin is shiny (namwezi means “feminine moon”) and bright green.

LENGTH 11 cm

INSIDE The flesh is whiter than most other varieties. Mild and starchy.
KIBUZI OR SHIBUZI – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE Fingers have a leaf-green color at full maturity. The ribs are strong and very visible, forming a pentagonal cross section.

LENGTH 8-12 cm

INSIDE Yellowish, sappy flesh with a smooth texture. Mild and starchy.

- Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners
- Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners
- Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium
- A green cooking banana, normally steamed.
KAKUTA KAMU
KAKUTA KAMU - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The skin is very thin, which is why this variety is given to children: It is easy to peel, unlike other varieties (no knife is required). Medium-sized with very smooth, yellowish-green skin.

LENGTH 7-9 cm

INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture and smells like cucumber.

Usually prepared unpeeled, as mpogola (or “jacket bananas”). If cooked for more than 20-30 minutes, it easily loses its consistency and palatability.
EMBIGGE ENSOWE – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

This banana could easily be mistaken for a green cooking banana. It has a blunt tip and a sausage-like shape. LENGTH 7 cm

INSIDE The flesh of this banana is whitish gray, and browns quickly when cut. It has a strong, sappy taste and is very sweet when fully mature.

OUTSIDE This banana could easily be mistaken for a green cooking banana. It has a blunt tip and a sausage-like shape.

Beverages—fingers are squeezed to extract the fresh juice.

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners
Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
BOGOYA
BOGOYA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

**OUTSIDE** Fingers are bright green, long, and slightly curved.

**LENGTH** 15-20 cm

**INSIDE** Sappy, white flesh. Mild and starchy, but more watery than other varieties.

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Commonly eaten raw as a dessert banana. In times of hunger it is peeled, cut into small pieces, and cooked with groundnut paste to make a stew, or steamed with other cooking bananas to enhance its palatability.
**KISUBI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

This variety is used for juice production. The fruits are peeled and squeezed to extract the juice, which is consumed fresh or fermented to make an alcoholic drink called tonto or bwakata. The high-quality juice can be used to produce spirits, but kisubi is such a scarce variety that it is difficult to obtain enough for distillation. In times of drought when there are food shortages, unripe kisubi fingers are peeled, sun dried, and ground to make flour, which is mixed with cassava flour to make a dough locally known as obutta.

**OUTSIDE** The fingers are short and whitish-green.

**LENGTH** less than 7 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh of the well-ripened fruit is sweet (it smells like apple and tastes a bit like pineapple). Kisubi bananas are occasionally made into a sort of pancake. The leaves are used in traditional cooking techniques, such as for steaming foods like luwombo.
NAMALIGA
NAMALIGA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

**OUTSIDE** Slightly curved, green, with very thin skin.

**LENGTH** 7-9 cm

**INSIDE** Sappy, white flesh. Mild and starchy, but more watery than other varieties.

Eaten steamed.
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Mixed with other foods (it is placed on top of the other foods and steamed unpeeled, as mpogola or “jacket bananas”).

**RIVUVU OR MANJAYA OR KIDOOZI – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

**OUTSIDE** It has dull green skin with a powdery whitish coating. The fingers have pronounced edges.

**LENGTH** The biggest banana of all, with a diameter of about 5 cm and a length of 16 cm.

**INSIDE** Grayish flesh and plentiful, purplish sap. Very sweet when ripe, tastes like caramel.
NDIIZI
OR SUKAARI
NDIIZI
OR APPLE BANANA
NDIIZI or Sukaari Ndiizi – How to Recognize It

The ndiizi is either eaten raw, as a dessert banana, or made into pancakes, in which case the mashed up bits of the worst looking bananas are mixed with cassava flour and baking soda or some other leavening agent. When there are food shortages, unripe ndiizi fingers are peeled, sun dried, and ground to make banana flour, which is mixed with millet flour to make a dough locally known as obutta.

Outside
Yellowish green with black spots on the slightly visible ribs.

Length
5-6 cm, the smallest banana of all.

Inside
The flesh has a coconut cream color. The well-ripened fruits are sweet, smell like apple, and taste a bit like pineapple.
MUFUNYAKONDE
MUFUNYAKONDE - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE Fingers are very short and yellowish green. Ribs appear as the fruit matures and the stigma falls off at full maturity.
LENGTH 7 cm
INSIDE This banana has primrose-colored flesh. Mild and starchy.

Fingers are steamed with the skin still on, as mpogola (“jacket bananas”); skin is removed at the moment of eating. Prepared to celebrate the birth of twins. Usually served with nakyebowa mushrooms.
GONJA
GONJA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE
Very long fingers, light green with white spots, ripening to pale yellow.

LENGTH 14-18cm.

INSIDE
Very dry with ash-white flesh. Has a mild taste and, when roasted, smells of caramel.

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Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Mostly roasted when ripe.
KAYINJA
OR NAMUFERI
KAYINJA OR NAMUFERI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE Whitish green.

INSIDE The flesh is white and very sappy, and browns quickly once exposed to air.

LENGTH 3-6 cm

The fruits can also be cut into smaller pieces, dried, and crushed to make flour.

The fingers can also be cut into smaller pieces, dried, and crushed to make flour.

OTHER USES

- The fruits are peeled and squeezed to extract the juice, which is consumed fresh, fermented to make an alcoholic drink called tonto or bwakata, or distilled to make spirits called waragi, kasese, or mandule.

- Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

- USED TO MAKE JUICE, BEER, AND SPIRITS.

- Waragi, kasese, or mandule

- Furthermore, the juice can be distilled to make an alcoholic drink called tonto or bwakata.
**NAKAMAALI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT**

**OUTSIDE** The fingers of the first bunches look like those of black nakitembe. Fingers from smaller bunches look more like nakabululu (silver green).

LENGTH 11-14 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh is cream colored. Mild and starchy.

Prepared unpeeled, as mpogola (or “jacket bananas”).
NJOGABAKAZI
NJOGABAKAZI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Outside It is a green cooking banana whose size varies depending on weather conditions.

The fingers are green and bulky.

Length at least 8 cm

Inside The flesh is cream colored.

Mild and starchy.

Eaten steamed.

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Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
NAKYEWAGULA
Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce. The steamed fingers are very soft.

**OUTSIDE** The fingers are rather long and yellowish green

**LENGTH** 10 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber.

Mild and starchy.
NAMUNYERE
OR NAMIMWE
NAMUNYERE OR NAMIMWE – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

It is a cooking banana.

OUTSIDE This one has straight, light green fingers with clearly visible edges.

LENGTH 9 cm

INSIDE The flesh is white and sappy. Mild and starchy.
NJOVU – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fingers are bulky, have pronounced edges, and are more conical than muvubo for example). The skin is tender.

LENGTH 16 cm during the rainy season, 8 cm in the dry season.

INSIDE The flesh is soft and has a creamy yellow color. Mild and starchy.

Eaten steamed.
KUFUBA
KUFUBA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

**OUTSIDE** Slightly curved with visible edges.

**LENGTH** 8 cm

**INSIDE** The flesh is white. Mild and starchy.

📍 Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

🍴 Eaten steamed.
What other varieties do you know?
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