

Got Overripe Bananas?

Pierrette HongChi - Dietitian & Health Coach

Bananas are delicious, nutrient dense and so tasty when they have ripened with the perfect amount of time. Once it becomes too ripened, however, the texture and taste (as well as the glycemic index!) is often no longer desirable, and many of us will throw it out at this point.

But, did you know that overripe bananas are great to naturally sweeten foods? It's the perfect ingredient to decrease the need for added sugars in recipes! Ripened bananas are one of the best ingredients used to enhance flavour, texture, and nutrition when preparing meals and snacks. In baking, it can often replace some of the added fat/oils to recipes while maintaining the desired moisture. Below are some ways to add ripened bananas to recipes/foods:

- Smoothies
- Muffins
- Breads/ loafs
- Cookies
- Oatmeal
- Pancakes/ Waffles
- Yogurt

So the next time the bananas have over ripened, consider trying to use it in a recipe, like a smoothie, to naturally sweeten your recipe. This is a great way to not only boost your nutrient intake but also helps to prevent food waste. And if you can't use it up right away, consider storing it in the freezer. Freezing bananas is a super simple, see below for tips.

To Freeze & Store Bananas:

1. Peel and place bananas in a freezer container- freeze bananas in a large zipped-top freezer bag or any covered container.
2. Freeze bananas for up to 3 months.
3. Defrost: Remove the frozen bananas from the freezer and thaw at room temperature for 2 hours, or in the refrigerator overnight. Or defrost in microwave at 50% power. The time varies depending on the microwave; 4-5 bananas takes approximately 3 minutes.
4. Bananas release liquid as they thaw. For best success in your baking recipe, pour all or most of this liquid out because it could add too much liquid to the batter. (Tip: If the banana baked good recipe calls for a liquid like milk, this brown banana liquid could be used instead (see note below).
5. Gently mash thawed, strained bananas with a fork and then use in baking recipe.

Notes:

- 1 very large banana usually gives you about 1/2 cup (115g) of mashed banana. When freezing and thawing the banana, this amount may be a little less since you are discarding some excess liquid. So if a recipe calls for 2 cups of mashed bananas (usually about 4 very large bananas, or 460g), you may need 5 frozen, thawed bananas.
- The brown banana liquid: If your recipe calls for a liquid such as milk, you can replace some of it with the banana liquid.
- Combine frozen, thawed, mashed bananas with fresh bananas if needed. If you have ripe bananas on your counter AND frozen bananas in your freezer, you can combine the mashed ripe bananas and the frozen, thawed, strained, mashed bananas to yield however much mashed banana you need in your baking recipe.

Shopping Tip:

Sometimes grocery stores will have a section for discounted food items that are near their expiry date or shelf life, and if available, bananas are a great choice to buy extra to freeze, store and use later. This is a great way to reduce food waste as well as helping you to save some money. And of course this makes it easier to prepare and incorporate healthy choices in your everyday eating pattern.

