



firm after ripening and good taste, hence high market demand.



FHIA 17 banana variety. Photo by: L.Wasilwa



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SELECTED COMMERCIAL BANANA COOKING VARIETIES



Introduction

Bananas are a rich source of both macronutrients and micronutrients. The cooking types have starchy fruits and are used in their mature unripe form as vegetables, and mostly cooked before consumption. They are a rich source of carbohydrates, potassium and vitamin B6, which helps fight infection and is essential for the synthesis of 'heme', the iron containing pigment of hemoglobin. Additionally, bananas are an excellent source of fibre. Cooking bananas can also be converted to other products such as flour, wine, beer and weaning food products. Green (un-ripened) bananas also can be sliced

Low productivity of local banana varieties and low adoption of improved varieties has led to low banana supplies that cannot meet the demand occasioned by the increasing human population driven by a more nutritionally aware consumer base. Farmers are increasingly finding adoption of improved banana varieties with market driven traits necessary in order to meet the market demands. Important cooking banana cultivars available in Kenya include Uganda green, Ngombe and FHIA 17, some of which are also dual purpose varieties to make chips and crisps.

Selected cooking banana varieties and their attributes

1. Uganda Green



Uganda Green banana variety

Uganda Green is an early maturing high yielding variety (18 tons/acre). It is cooked and often mashed or pounded into a meal or *matoke*, a staple food in East Africa.

The crop is harvested green, carefully peeled and then cooked. It is a candidate variety of choice, given its suitability range for the highlands (climatic conditions and response to irrigation). It's known for its disease resistance to Panama, Cigar and end rot. It is an ideal banana choice for farmers who want to grow a low-maintenance banana variety.

Ngombe

Ngombe is a dual purpose banana variety (cooking and dessert type). It is early maturing and responds well to climatic conditions, and also to irrigation. It is uniform in growth and has long fingers. The variety is good for chips and crisps. It develops appealing golden yellow colour when deep fried. The outer skin is partially green and turns yellow when it ripens. It has a starchy texture, ideal for making *matoke* (cooked banana) and also excellent for making flour.



Ngombe banana variety. Photo by: L. Wasilwa

Variety FHIA 17

FHIA 17 is a dual purpose banana (dessert and cooking type). It is early maturing (18 to 24 months), and does well at altitude of 0 -1800 m above sea level and rainfall range 1000 - 2000 mm). It is resistant to black sigatoka, fusarium wilt disease and nematodes making it popular with small-scale farming. The FHIA-17 banana plant is also known for its high yield of 60 kg bunch about (18-24) tons/acre; and fast growth rate, making it an ideal choice for farmers who want quick returns on investment. The FHIA 17 has medium to long fingers, has a long shelf life,