

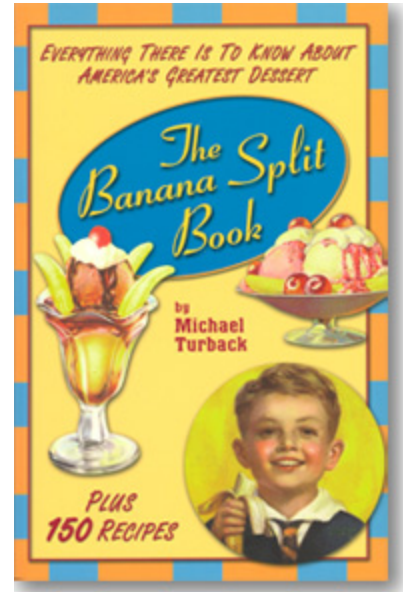
The Banana Split Book

Everything There Is to Know about America's
Greatest Dessert

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From the Introduction

Americans like a good story--especially about themselves. While *The Banana Split Book* is obviously about the concoction of bananas and ice cream, it is also a revealing portrait of America.



The banana is a nutritious source of fiber and potassium in our diets, a comic prop that has induced giggles and snorts since Charlie Chaplin started slipping on its peels, and an object of sexual innuendo ever since Mae West wondered if her boyfriend had one in his pocket.

The proof, of course, is in the tasting, and at its peak of ripeness the banana's soft, pillowy texture and sweet, brilliant fruit flavor are oh-so-easy to love. That's probably why each and every one of us consumes 29 pounds of those little yellow boomerangs every year. But sooner or later our bananas meet up with ice cream, and whenever they do, it's magic time!

Assembling a Banana Split is a primal culinary exercise and an opportunity for spectacle. Eating one unleashes 10 different ingredients, fighting each other for your attention. It is at once highbrow, lowbrow, flashy and trashy, foolish, fancy, and unapologetically eccentric. It is much more, of course, than the sum of its parts, and, not surprisingly, every August 25 is set aside to celebrate National Banana Split Day and to preserve the dessert's precious place in our nation's culture.

More than any other native dish, the Banana Split is an essential vintage reminder of the American genius for invention, passion for indulgence, and reputation for wackiness. It's like no other dessert in the world--a grand idea that could only have been conceived in a place as grand as America.

Skyscraper Banana Split

Ladle 2 ounces of chocolate syrup into the bottom of a tulip glass. Add 1 scoop of vanilla ice cream. Split 1 banana lengthwise, then cut the split halves again widthwise. Put the banana quarters, cut side out, into the glass and add 1 scoop of chocolate ice cream to keep them in place. Ladle on 2 ounces of strawberry syrup. Garnish with whipped cream, and place a whole cherry at the top.

Banana Capital

Until the advent of mechanically refrigerated railroad cars, Fulton, Kentucky, was a major distribution point for most of the bananas sold in the eastern United States. Bananas were loaded into "ice reefers" belonging to the Fruit Growers Express Company in New Orleans and shipped northward until they reached Fulton. At that point the cars needed to have a fresh supply of block ice to prevent spoilage. At Fulton, the long Fruit Growers Express (FGE) trains were also broken down and shipped north by the Illinois Central Railroad and east by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

Fulton became known as the Banana Capital of the United States. Although the days of mile-long FGE trains are long gone, for many years the city held a weeklong "International Banana Festival," with a carnival, a beauty contest (for the title of International Banana Princess), and a one-ton batch of banana pudding. The last festival was held in September 1992.