

THE BANANA REPUBLIC

UNITED FRUIT COMPANY'S DOMINANCE IN THE UNITED STATES & LATIN AMERICA 1900-2000



30 LBS

15 LBS

5 LBS

U.S. BANANA CONSUMPTION (PER CAPITA)



At the beginning of the twentieth century, immigrants arriving at Ellis Island were given bananas to eat.

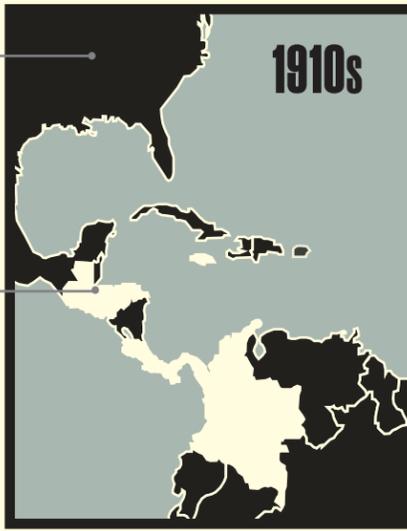
1904: United Fruit Company published *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* with the intention to teach the public new recipes to expand the banana's use and consumption.



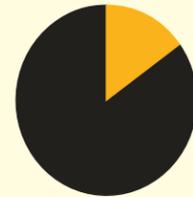
1905: A contract signed in London gives United Fruit Co. control of all railroad facilities for a 99-year term lease in Costa Rica. This lease is not approved by the government of Costa Rica.



1913: The Senate Finance committee included the banana as one of the potential goods to be taxed under the proposed Underwood-Simmons Tariff. Lobbyists for the fruit and journalists described the tariff as an effort that would tax the "fruit of the poor man".



1917: Guatemala and Honduras teeter on the edge of war over a disputed territory along the Montagua river. Behind the conflict are the United Fruit Co., and their rival, Cuyamel Fruit Co. Later in 1928, Guatemala and Honduras go to war, a conflict that is encouraged by the two companies.

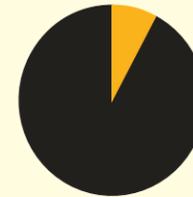


1923: The song "Yes, We Have No Bananas" by Frank Silver and Irving Cohn sold 25,000 copies a day.

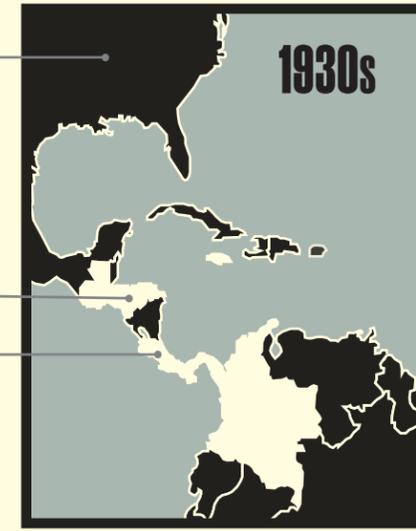
1927: The Fruit Dispatch Co., a subsidiary of the United Fruit Co., published a book that enumerated the health benefits of bananas for working-class Americans. It provided scientific evidence that bananas contained more vitamins, calories, and protein than other fruits, at a much lower price.



1928: United Fruit banana workers demonstrating in Cienaga, Colombia for greater stability and formal contracts with United Fruit Co. are killed by the Colombian Army.

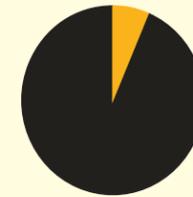


1935: The Works Progress Administration is authorized, and between 1935 and 1943, the WPA builds over 650,000 miles of roads and highways. This road system allows for new markets for bananas to open in rural places where railroads had not reached years earlier.



By 1930, the United Fruit Co. had amounted \$277,066 in unpaid taxes on railroad properties owned or controlled in Costa Rica. In an Executive Order of the same year, the company's fines were stricken from the books, an act considered by many to be unconstitutional in that only the Congress has the authority to release such payments.

1932: Labor unrest breaks out in Honduras following the United Fruit Co.'s decision to fire 800 banana workers.



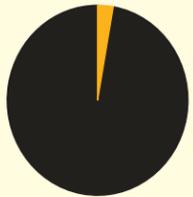
1941: The United Fruit Co. stops all shipments of bananas to the US because of the presence of German submarines in the Caribbean Sea.

1944: Dik Browne is hired by the United Fruit Co. to create the cartoon character "Miss Chiquita Banana". Three years later, Miss Chiquita Banana appears in several technicolor films including *Chiquita Banana & the Cannibal*, in which Miss Chiquita Banana gives advice on how to properly eat bananas rather than people.



1947: The Guatemalan government establishes a labor code under the new president, Juan Jose Arevalo, which aims to improve working conditions for Guatemalans, especially within United Fruit Co.'s plantations. The company accuses the code of being "Communist" and threatens to leave the country.

1949: Labor issues in Guatemala, Colombia, and Costa Rica decrease United Fruit Co.'s production and interrupt shipments.





After WWII, technological innovations allowed for the better preservation of fruit. During the post-war period, per capita consumption of processed fruit increased, while consumption of fresh fruit fell. For the first time, the banana lost its nonseasonal advantage at the supermarket.

During the 1960s, bananas became a counter-culture symbol. It is widely considered that smoking a banana peel produces a psychedelic high. In response, the frightened United Fruit Co. invests in an extensive testing program by the FDA and scientists at University of California at Los Angeles and New York University.

1967: In a promotion campaign, the United Fruit Co. distributes 90,000 illustrated recipe cards for Chiquita banana and peanut butter sandwiches to schools in the US.

Beginning in the 1970s, Americans become increasingly concerned with their diets and health. Several medical and government reports began to assume a connection between a risk of cancer and an unhealthy diet. The 1970s also bring about an awareness of obesity which dramatically affects American food consumption. Between 1970 and 1997, American per capita consumption of fruits and vegetables increase by 24 percent.

In response to new American dieting and fashion trends, when Carl Linder becomes president in 1980, he decides to refocus the company on the banana business and let go of some of the processed fruit subsidiaries.

From 1990 to 2000, president Carl Linder and the United Fruit Co. (then Chiquita Brands International), contribute significant funds to several politicians. Linder donates \$1.5 million, in addition to a Chiquita airplane to the presidential campaign of Bob Dole. Between 1993 and 1999, Linder donates \$5 billion to the Democratic and Republican parties. Linder also contributes to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush (\$1.03 million) and Al Gore (\$677,000).



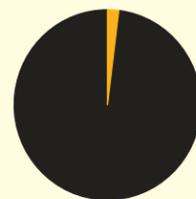
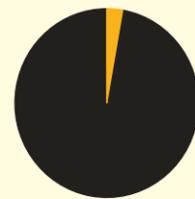
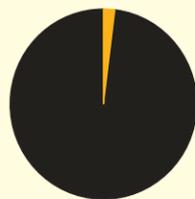
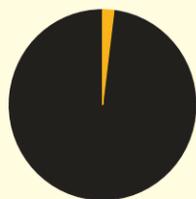
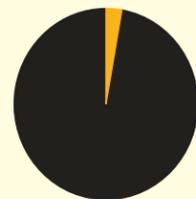
1954: Democratically-elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz, is overthrown by a US-backed military force in response to an agrarian reform aimed at expropriating unused lands of the United Fruit Co. which Arbenz implemented in 1953. Also in 1954, the US Dept. of Justice filed an antitrust suit against United Fruit. As a result, in 1956, the company is forced to sell its holdings in the International Railways of Central America, in addition to all lands in Guatemala, which they later fulfilled in 1972.

1969: Eli Black buys 733,000 shares of United Fruit Co in a single day and becomes the largest shareholder. Six years later, Black commits suicide by jumping from the 45th floor of his office building. Following Black's death, a bribery scandal involving United Fruit Co. (then United Brands), Black, and Honduran president the Osvaldo Lopez Arellano is uncovered. Arellano had received \$2.5 million in bribes in exchange for cutting taxes on banana exports.

1974: Central American governments form the Union de Países Exportadores de Banano (UPEB) to control banana exports by increasing taxes on companies like United Fruit Co. (then United Brands), control supply to manipulate prices, and to change the tax and land concessions granted to the companies in the past. The United Fruit Co. protests the UPEB countries' new banana export taxes by interrupting shipments and threatening layoffs. In Panama, United Fruit's boycott results in \$1 million worth of bananas destroyed.

The United Fruit Co. (then Chiquita Brands International) makes greater investments in land and ships in anticipation of a market opening in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe and reunified Germany. Yet, the European Union takes on a common policy towards banana imports which gives preference to banana producers in Africa and the Caribbean. In the following decade, a group of senators (including Bob Dole) urge President Clinton to take action against what they perceive to be illegal discrimination against US corporations. The US brings the case to the World Trade Organization in 1995.

From 1997 to 2004, the United Fruit Co. (then Chiquita Brands International) pays \$1.7 million to paramilitary groups in Colombia in order to protect its workers. In 2001, the US government designates the paramilitary groups as a terrorist organization.



● UNITED FRUIT CO. TOTAL ASSETS ■ % OF LAND OWNED

THE UNITED FRUIT COMPANY'S PARTICULAR FORM OF ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM IN LATIN AMERICA IS REFLECTED IN THE IMAGE IT RETAINED WITHIN THESE COUNTRIES: EL PULPO (THE OCTOPUS). THE COMPANY'S DOMINANCE WAS FAR-REACHING IN BOTH LATIN AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES. IT TRANSFORMED LANDSCAPES AND LIVELIHOODS THROUGH CLEARING JUNGLES; EXPLOITING ITS WORKERS; CONSTRUCTING COUNTLESS PLANTATIONS, HOSPITALS, RESEARCH FACILITIES, AND RAILROADS; PROVIDING BANKING SERVICES, ELECTRICAL PLANTS, AND SEWERAGE SYSTEMS; ALTERING A NATION'S FOOD HISTORY; AND DOMINEERING GOVERNMENTS FROM COLOMBIA TO THE WHITE HOUSE.