

Diet

Frederick Douglass, the escaped slave and abolitionist, wrote in 1845: "The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal." While most slaves consumed enough calories per day to complete a 10-12-hour work day, they rarely had the nutrients they needed for good health. Most slaves were allowed to keep a vegetable garden where they grew sweet potatoes, plantain trees, and other fruits and vegetables. Without the gardens, the slaves would essentially be living on cornbread and hush puppies. With little time to themselves, most of their meals had to be prepared quickly.

Healthy recipe Fried plantains (serves 6-8)

Ingredients

4 plantains
1 cup canola oil (slaves likely used lard)
Salt, to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oil in a large, deep skillet over medium high heat.
2. Peel the plantains and cut them in half, slicing the halves lengthwise into thin pieces.
3. Fry the pieces until browned and tender. Drain excess oil on paper towels.
4. Sprinkle the pieces with salt.
5. Serve as a side with grilled, broiled, or boiled fish.