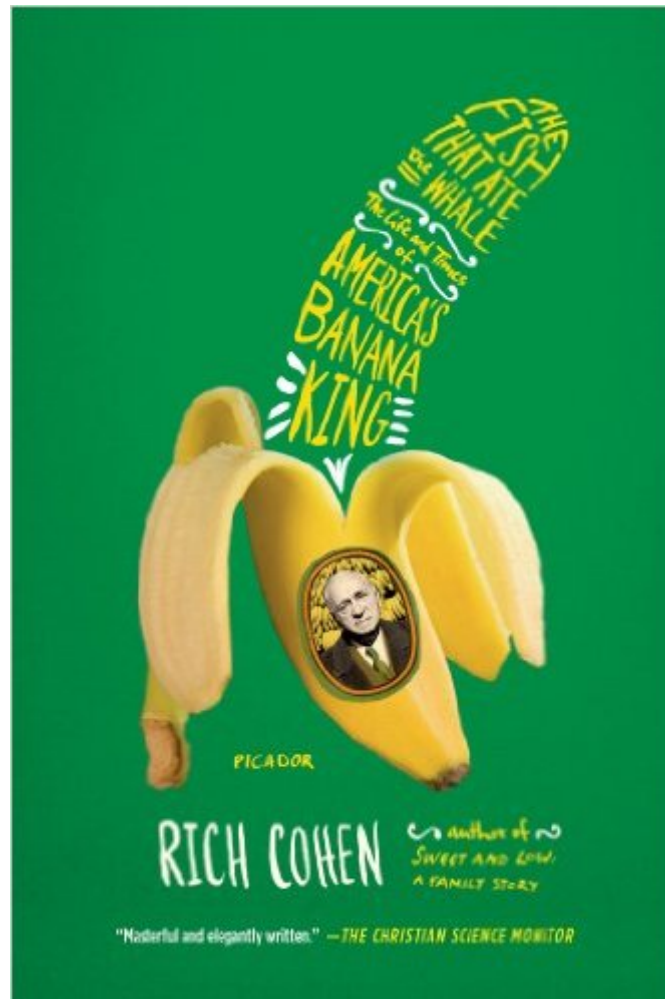


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# The Fish That Ate The Whale: The Life And Times Of America's Banana King



## Synopsis

Named a Best Book of the Year by the San Francisco Chronicle and The Times-Picayune The fascinating untold tale of Samuel Zemurray, the self-made banana mogul who went from penniless roadside banana peddler to kingmaker and capitalist revolutionary The fascinating, untold tale of Samuel Zemurray, the self-made banana mogul who went from penniless roadside banana peddler to kingmaker and capitalist revolutionary When Samuel Zemurray arrived in America in 1891, he was tall, gangly, and penniless. When he died in the grandest house in New Orleans sixty-nine years later, he was among the richest, most powerful men in the world. Working his way up from a roadside fruit peddler to conquering the United Fruit Company, Zemurray became a symbol of the best and worst of the United States: proof that America is the land of opportunity, but also a classic example of the corporate pirate who treats foreign nations as the backdrop for his adventures. Zemurray lived one of the great untold stories of the last hundred years. Starting with nothing but a cart of freckled bananas, he built a sprawling empire of banana cowboys, mercenary soldiers, Honduran peasants, CIA agents, and American statesmen. From hustling on the docks of New Orleans to overthrowing Central American governments and precipitating the bloody thirty-six-year Guatemalan civil war, the Banana Man lived a monumental and sometimes dastardly life. Rich Cohen's brilliant historical profile *The Fish That Ate the Whale* unveils Zemurray as a hidden power broker, driven by an indomitable will to succeed.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have worked for United Fruit Company over 30 years, 15 of which were in the tropics: Colombia,

Costa Rica and Honduras, and remember the legend of Sam Zemurray well from the tales of people I worked with. While the story overall is fascinating and contains a number of historic facts that I was unaware of, for example the Israel connection, there are numerous technical errors in the manuscript. It makes me wonder who proofread the book before it was published. Here are just a few of those errors: The river Utila he refers to is called the Ulua. Utila is one of the Bay Islands off the Caribbean coast; bananas do ripen on the "tree" beautifully and taste delicious, you just have to cut them down green so they can be packed and transported by ship to the markets where they are finally ripened in specially equipped ripening rooms; the banana stem and bunch are synonymous, the stem or bunch has typically 7 to 10 hands and each hand is cut into clusters of 5 fingers (average) for retail display for the final consumer. Sam Zemurray was a real macho and the right man for those times. He created a banana empire where there were jungles before. The liberal minded college professors and historians should know that each farm had a village with a house for every laborer, a farm store, a free school and a free dispensary with access to a free central hospital. The pay may have been low, but they did not pay for their housing and many local schoolteachers quit their jobs in the national schools because the pay at the company packing stations was so much higher. The unions fought the company whenever it wanted to turn over their facilities to local ownership because they knew that the laborers were far better off working for the "gringos" rather than local bosses/farmers.

Sam Zemurray walks into a jungle, grows a product, becomes a giant. He takes over companies, a market, a continent. He becomes a political problem. He rescues a nation. And he becomes a rich man, a legend, finally a great story. You travel the whole thing with him, under the big sun and with the smells of the jungle and the rolling train compartments and the central air in the boardrooms. You see him grow from a lanky green immigrant kid--Cohen describes him as tall and hard-eyed, and you keep seeing Sam as John Wayne, or like George Clooney--to a rolled-sleeve powerhouse on the plantations to a man in a suit in the corridors of power, the most dangerous of all. Rich Cohen is telling a great story, an adventure story. You look at the things you want. You imagine going out to get them; then you do get them and what does it mean to you and do to you? What does it mean for your family--the people you live with, the ones you leave behind with the money? It's The Godfather with Bananas. It's also any life, in bigger letters. And it's the business, how the banana traveled from jungle to your table; that's Sam Zemurray there, in your cabinet, who got the fruit sliced onto your cereal, in your yoghurt at the brunch place. In the book Cohen takes you across the picturebook South--farms and piers and sly deckhands--to palmy New Orleans and then

into the tropics, the messy place we go to extract the good stuff. Manpower, resources, money, all to be spent and converted to power back in the necktie regions. The book gives you everything. The jungles. Gun fights on the plantations. Rickety airplanes. The stacks of money, the anxious men in offices and D.C., the agents, ultimatums. Mercenaries and revolutions.

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