

HARVEST for HEALTH



Artwork by Saxton Freymann

It's SWEET POTATOES!

Sweet Potato Facts

- Sweet potatoes are native to South America and are one of the oldest known vegetables.
- Christopher Columbus introduced sweet potatoes to Europe after discovering them on his trip to the New World in 1492.
- The sweet potato is not a potato or even a distant cousin. Potatoes are tubers; sweet potatoes are roots.
- Unlike potatoes, sweet potatoes do not belong to the nightshade family of vegetables. They are in the same plant family as morning glories.
- They are propagated mostly by stem or root cuttings instead of seeds. The leaves and shoots are edible.
- China produces 80% of the world's crop, with 60% of that going to feed pigs. North Carolina produces 39% of U.S. sweet potatoes, with California, Louisiana and Mississippi close behind.

Did You Know?

Sweet potatoes come in a variety of colors from white, yellow, and orange to red or purple. Inside flesh can be white, yellow or orange. The pale-skinned, yellow flesh sweet potato has a dry, crumbly texture similar to a white baked potato. The thicker-skinned, dark orange to reddish variety (erroneously called a "yam" in the U.S.) has a vivid orange, sweet flesh and a moist texture. True yams aren't related to the sweet potato at all – they have brown or black skin resembling the bark of a

tree and can grow over seven feet in length. True yams are grown in tropical climates, primarily in South America, Africa and the Caribbean.

Nutritional Value

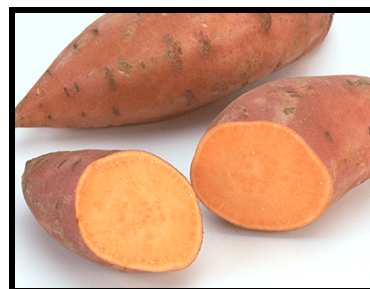
A 4-ounce serving of sweet potato (about 1/2 cup) provides 390% daily value (DV) of vitamin A, 40% DV of vitamin C, 18% DV of fiber and 13% DV of potassium, plus vitamin E, iron, magnesium and phytochemicals like beta carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin. Sweet potatoes have twice as much dietary fiber as white potatoes. This fiber slows down the digestion and release of sugar, helping to stabilize blood sugar levels and lower insulin resistance. All of these factors have prompted the Center for Science in the Public Interest to call it one of the most nutritious vegetables in the land.

Selection

Choose sweet potatoes that are firm with no cracks, bruises or soft spots. Avoid sweet potatoes that are displayed in the refrigerated section of the market. Cold temperatures will alter the flavor.

Storage

Store in a cool, dark, dry, well-ventilated place. Moisture, as well as light, will encourage the potatoes to sprout. Once cooked, sweet potatoes can be stored in a covered container for up to one week in the refrigerator, or wrapped individually with the skins on and frozen for later use.



How to Prepare

To steam: This is the healthiest way to prepare sweet potatoes. Wash and peel, or leave the skins on if the potatoes are organic. Cut into 1/2" cubes and steam for about 7 minutes.

To bake: Wash potato, then pierce skin a few times with a fork. Place in a 400 degree oven for 45-70 minutes until fork tender.

To boil: Boiling is not the top choice for cooking sweet potatoes as they absorb water and lose flavor and nutrients. If you do boil, use as little water as possible and drain immediately once cooked.

Add More Sweet Potatoes to Your Life

- Spices such as cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, and cumin, or additions such as honey, lime, coconut, maple syrup or chipotle peppers all complement the flavor of sweet potatoes.
- Boost the nutritional value of potato recipes by replacing some of the white potatoes with sweet potatoes.
- Add sweet potato chunks or puree to soups, chili, spaghetti sauce, even pizza.
- Mash steamed or baked sweet potatoes with a little olive oil, garlic, and spices such as rosemary and thyme to taste. Or try a sweet-spicy version with a little maple syrup, chili powder, and ginger.
- Substitute mashed, seasoned sweet potatoes for refried beans in tostadas or burritos.
- Top green or Caesar salad with small, cooked sweet potato chunks instead of croutons.
- Substitute sweet potato chips for crackers when making appetizers. Cut narrow, peeled sweet potatoes into 1/3" slices. Arrange on a lightly oiled cookie sheet in single layer, season with salt and pepper, then bake at 425 degrees until tender and lightly browned, about 10-15 minutes. Let cool, then top with hummus, turkey salad or other toppings.



Vegetarian Sweet Potato Chili

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped green bell pepper
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup chopped zucchini
- 1 cup chopped, peeled carrot
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons light olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup water
- 1 can (28 oz) diced tomatoes
- 1 cup mild or medium salsa

- 3 cups peeled, cubed NC sweet potatoes
- 1 can (28 oz) red kidney beans
- 1 can (15 oz) black-eyed peas
- 1 cup corn kernels

In a large soup pot, sauté onion, peppers, zucchini, carrot and garlic in olive oil about 5 minutes or until tender. Stir in cumin, salt, pepper, water, tomatoes, salsa and sweet potatoes. Simmer 20 minutes, stirring often. Add kidney beans, black-eyed peas and corn. Cook another 20 minutes over low heat. Season to taste. Makes 12 servings. Recipe from North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission.

Baked Sweet Potato Fries

- 4 sweet potatoes
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- Salt or seasonings to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Clean and cut sweet potatoes into 1/2" thick lengthwise strips and toss with oil. Lightly oil baking sheet and arrange potatoes. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown on bottom. Turn potatoes over and bake another 15-20 minutes. Sprinkle with seasonings. Serves 4-6. 166 Cal; 9g fat; 1g protein; 22g carbs; 0mg chol; 30 mg sodium; 3g dietary fiber. Recipe from Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission.

Resources

Remember to look for low-fat recipes, or substitute high-fat ingredients with low-fat options.

Sweet Potato Recipes & Tips

- www.ncsweetpotatoes.com
- www.sweetpotato.org
- www.eatingwell.com
- www.whfoods.com

Cancer/Nutrition Websites

- www.cancerproject.org
- www.aicr.org
- www.cancer.net

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www.bendcancer.org & www.defeatcancer.info

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