



Harvest of the Month | Family Newsletter

Potatoes



he potato plant produces flowers from which inedible fruits grow. The part of the plant referred to as the potato grows underground, is known as a tuber, and serves as a nutrient store for the plant.

Three thousand varieties of potatoes are grown in the United States, but only 100 are grown regularly. Potatoes are broken into four basic categories: russet, long white, round white, and round red. Each type of potato has its own unique color, taste, shape, and texture. Most potatoes have white flesh but they are also available with purple and pink flesh.



Did you know?



In October 1995, the potato became the first vegetable to be grown in space.



The potato is the number one vegetable crop in the United States.



The potato is the second most consumed food in the United States, trailing only milk products.

Selection

Look for potatoes that are firm and smooth and have few eyes. Avoid potatoes with green coloring, wrinkled skin, mold, cuts or bruises, sprouting, and soft, decayed areas.

Storage

Store potatoes in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place, ideally between 45–55°F. Do not store potatoes in the refrigerator because refrigerator temperatures can cause the starch in potatoes to convert to sugar, resulting in a sweeter taste and darkening during cooking. Do not wash potatoes prior to storing. Moisture will encourage sprouting so a dry storage area is ideal for potatoes. Store away from onions as the onions may cause the potatoes to spoil. Potatoes will keep for 1 to 3 weeks.

Handling

Potatoes should be washed well under running water and scrubbed with a clean vegetable brush before cooking or baking. Sprouts should be cut away before cooking. Peeling can remove the hard-to-clean outer surface, but will also decrease the nutritional value of the potato.

Potatoes can produce solanine, a substance which causes potatoes to turn green and have a bitter flavor, if they have been exposed to light or extreme cold or warm temperatures for prolonged periods of time. Solanine is a toxic substance. If green discoloration is noticed on a potato, cut off and discard the green area.

Sometimes potatoes that are cut but uncooked develop a pinkish or brownish discoloration. This is due to the carbohydrate in the food reacting with oxygen in the air. Potatoes that become discolored are safe to eat and do not need to be discarded. The color usually



disappears with cooking. Storing in cold water or adding lemon juice or vinegar to the water can inhibit discoloration. Soaking in water should be limited to two hours to retain water-soluble vitamins.

Nutrition

Potatoes provide fiber, vitamin C, and potassium. Fiber helps to maintain healthy digestion and may play a role in reducing the risk of diseases such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. (Removing the potato skin significantly reduces the amount of fiber.) Vitamin C is important in the body's healing process and may play a role in guarding against heart disease and cancer. Vitamin C also helps the body absorb iron. Potassium helps maintain your cell growth and normal water levels in the body. While on their own potatoes are low in fat and sodium, the processing of potatoes into products such as potato chips and French fries and the addition of ingredients such as butter, sour cream, cheese, and mayonnaise to potato recipes may add significant amounts of fat and sodium.

Harvest Season

According to the PA Preferred Seasonal Calendar, Pennsylvania potatoes are available from January through April and August through December.

Preparation

Potatoes are a versatile vegetable that can be prepared using many different cooking methods including baking, boiling, microwaving, grilling, roasting, and steaming. Potatoes can be eaten as a vegetable side dish or used as an ingredient in soups, salads, stews, and casseroles. The best preparation methods for potatoes vary by type of potato. For example, russet, red, and yellow potatoes are good for baking and roasting, red potatoes are best for grilling, and white potatoes are good for steaming and to use in salads, soups, and stews. For more information on best uses of potatoes by type of potato see <https://www.potatogoodness.com/potato-types/>.



Recipe | Roasted Herb Potatoes

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients	Measure	Directions
		1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.
Vegetable cooking spray		2. Coat a baking sheet with vegetable cooking spray.
Potatoes	1 pound (3 medium or 3 cups cubed)	3. Wash and peel the potatoes, or leave the skins on if preferred.
		4. Cut the potatoes into ½-inch cubes, and put them in a large bowl.
Vegetable oil	2 teaspoons	5. Put the oil, rosemary, and salt in a small bowl. Stir together.
Rosemary	½ teaspoon	
Salt	½ teaspoon	
		6. Pour the oil mix over the potatoes. Stir to coat the potatoes evenly.
		7. Spread the potatoes on the baking sheet.
		8. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until lightly browned.

Source: [Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Program, Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network Website Recipes](#)



Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website (www.paharvestofthemonth.org) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.

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