What’s So Great about Sweet Potatoes?
Selecting and Storing Sweet Potatoes
Varieties of Sweet Potatoes
Fitting Sweet Potatoes into MyPyramid
Recipe Collection
Grow Your Own Sweet Potatoes
Activity Alley
What’s So Great about Sweet Potatoes?

- Sweet potatoes are more fragile than white potatoes. Use extra care when selecting sweet potatoes.
- Look for Firm sweet potatoes with smooth, bright, uniformly colored skins.
- Avoid Sweet potatoes with worm holes, cuts, or any other problems with the skin. Skin problems cause waste and can lead to decay. Cutting away decay will not help because the rest of the potato flesh may have a bad taste. Decay is the worst problem with sweet potatoes. There are three types of decay.
- Storage Sweet potatoes have a thin skin that is easily damaged. Sweet potatoes should not be stored in the refrigerator. Keep in a cool (55°F to 60°F), dry place, such as a cellar, pantry, or garage. Sweet potatoes will keep for a month or longer if stored at 55°F. If kept at room temperature, sweet potatoes should be used within a week.

Selecting and Storing Sweet Potatoes

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Avoid
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- Wet, soft decay.
- Dry, firm decay. This begins at the end of the potato, making it discolored and shriveled.
- Dry rot in the form of sunken discolored areas on the sides of the potato.

What’s So Great about Sweet Potatoes?

- Sweet potatoes are excellent sources of vitamin A, potassium, vitamin C and fiber.
- Sweet potatoes also contain niacin, folate, and iron.
- Like most vegetables, sweet potatoes are low in fat and are cholesterol free.
- Sweet potatoes can be prepared with sweet or savory flavors.
- Sweet potatoes go well with meats, fruits, and other vegetables.
- Canned, frozen, or fresh, sweet potatoes are available all year.
Varieties of **Sweet Potatoes**

There are two basic types of sweet potato. Each variety is described and pictured below.

<< Moist (orange-fleshed) >>

Moist sweet potatoes are the most common type. They have orange-colored flesh and are very sweet.

**Dry (yellow-fleshed) >>**

Dry sweet potatoes have pale-colored flesh and are low in moisture.

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**Did you know?**

**About Canned Sweet Potatoes?**

Sweet potatoes are also sold canned or frozen. The canned potatoes are usually packed in heavy syrup or “candied.” Candied sweet potatoes are high in sugar and fats. Canned sweet potatoes are much lower in beta-carotene, vitamin C, and B vitamins than fresh ones.

**What is beta-carotene?**

Beta-carotene is an antioxidant and a part of the carotenoid vitamin family. Carotenoids are found in brightly colored fruits and vegetables. The brighter the color of a fruit or vegetable, the higher the beta-carotene content. Beta-carotene is changed in the body to make vitamin A. This is a nutrient important for vision, immune function, and skin and bone health. Sweet potatoes are a good source of betacarotene.
Preparation Tips

Scrub the potatoes under cold running water before cooking.

**Baking**
Pierce the potatoes with a fork before baking. Piercing lets steam escape. Bake until a fork is inserted easily. This is about 30 minutes for small potatoes. Larger potatoes take about 60 minutes.

**Boiling**
Wash potatoes. Potatoes can be boiled without peeling. The skins will slip off easily when the potatoes are done. This allows more of the nutrients to stay in the potato. Sweet potato skins can be eaten. Skins supply dietary fiber. Cooking time for whole potatoes varies from 15 to 35 minutes. Cooking time for chunks is 10 to 15 minutes.

**Microwaving**
Wash the potatoes. Pierce them several times with a fork. Place on a paper towel. Let the potatoes stand for five to 10 minutes when done. Cooking time for two medium potatoes is 5 to 9 minutes. For four potatoes cooking time is 10 to 13 minutes.

Fitting Sweet Potatoes into MyPyramid

The **GREEN** triangle of MyPyramid is the vegetable section. Vegetables may be raw or cooked, fresh, frozen, or canned. Age, gender, and level of physical activity determine the daily vegetable need. About 2 ½ cups of vegetables are recommended for a 2000 calorie per day diet. On MyPyramid, sweet potatoes are an orange vegetable. For a 2000 calorie diet, it is recommended having about 2 cups of orange vegetables per week. For more information on vegetable serving sizes visit www.mypyramid.gov.

Nutrition Facts

1 cup cooked Sweet Potatoes

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<th>Trans Fat</th>
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<th>Total Carbohydrate</th>
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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

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Mashed Sweet Potatoes
Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS
4 small to medium sweet potatoes
3/4 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Estimated Cost: Per Recipe: $1.21
Per Serving: $0.30

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Wash and pierce sweet potatoes. Wrap in paper towels.
2. Microwave for 10 minutes (with the skins). Allow to rest for 5 minutes. If you don’t have a microwave, boil for 15-20 minutes or until tender.
3. Scoop out the warm potatoes
4. Put the potatoes in a medium bowl.
5. Use a fork or potato masher to mash the potatoes.
6. Mix in the thyme, salt, and pepper.

Nutrition Facts
2 cups Squash Soup

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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Grow Your Own
Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes are started from plants called “slips.” Set the plants 12 to 18 inches apart. Place on a raised ridge about 8 inches high. Allow at least 3 to 4 feet between rows. Sweet potatoes need minimal care to keep down weeds. Do not water during the last 3 to 4 weeks before harvest. Dig around the time of the first frost in the fall. Use a spading fork or stout shovel. Be careful not to bruise, cut or damage the roots. Dig below the level of the ridge. Move closer toward the plants, removing soil until the fat roots are exposed. Carefully dig under these roots. Remove from the soil. The roots should be allowed to dry on the ground for 2 to 3 hours. Sweet potatoes should be handled as little as possible. For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Services at 202-274-7125.
**Activity Alley**

**Sweet Potato Scramble**

**Directions:** Unscramble each of the clue words about sweet potatoes. Take the letters that appear in boxes and unscramble them for the final message.

- MANTIAVI
- FEIBR
- STMAOPIUS
- NITMAIVC
- TIOSM
- RYD
- REONAG
- LEWLOY
- ERHFS
- CANDEN
- REFZON

T
ACTIVITY ALLEY

Sweet Potatoes Coloring Activity
References


Nutrition for Everyone: Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Center for Disease Control and Prevention: May 2008.


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Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health

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