



KENTUCKY POTATOES

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The potato is the swollen tip of an underground stem. It stores energy in the form of starch to support new stems that form eyes. This starch is an important source of complex carbohydrates in the American diet.

The potato was cultivated more than 4,000 years ago as a staple food of the Incas. The name comes from a Caribbean Indian word for the sweet potato, batata. The potato came to the United States via Ireland in 1719. Because it was inexpensive and easy to grow, the potato was quickly established on all continents and became one of the most important vegetables in the world.

Although there are many varieties of potatoes grown in the world, the most common varieties grown in Kentucky are Kennebec and Superior. Most Kentucky-grown potatoes are harvested in the fall.

Fresh Is Best

The potato is one of America's most popular vegetables and is available all year. Potatoes are easy to cook and can be prepared in many ways including baking, frying, and boiling. Potatoes can also be purchased canned, dehydrated, mashed, diced, flaked, fried, and deep-frozen.

A medium baked potato without any added seasoning has approximately 100 calories and is low in dietary fat and sodium. The potato is a good source of vitamin C, B vitamins, potassium, and complex carbohydrates. Eaten with the peel, potatoes are a good source of fiber. Although the skin contains many nutrients, the rest of the potato provides most of the vitamins.

Selection and Storage

Select firm, unbruised potatoes. Green potatoes and sprouts contain a chemical that is harmful if eaten and should be peeled or discarded. Red or new potatoes have a higher moisture content and are known as "waxy" types that are best boiled for use in scalloped potatoes or potato salads. Drier potatoes or "mealy" types such as the Kennebec are best for baking, french frying, and mashing.

Store potatoes in a cool, humid, dark place that is well ventilated. Light and high temperatures will cause the potato to sprout and shrivel. The best temperature for storage is 45°F. Lowertemperatures or refrigeration will turn the starch to sugar, causing the potato to darken when cooked.

Preparation Tips

Scrub potatoes. Peel if desired. Cook peeled potatoes immediately because they will turn dark. If you cannot cook them right away, sprinkle them with lemon juice or cold water to prevent darkening. Soaking potatoes in cold water for more than a few minutes causes vitamin loss.

To Boil:

1. Bring to a boil in a saucepan enough water to cover potatoes.
2. Cover saucepan and cook medium-sized potatoes for approximately 30-40 minutes.

To Steam:

1. Cut medium-sized potatoes into quarters.
2. Bring one inch of water to a boil in a saucepan. Place the potatoes on a rack or in a basket in the pan. Do not immerse in water.
3. Cover tightly and steam potatoes for approximately 15-20 minutes.

To Bake:

1. Scrub potatoes, leaving the skin on.
2. Pierce the skin with a fork so steam will escape, preventing the potato from bursting.
3. Bake at 400°F for 45 minutes-1 hour.

To Bake in the Microwave:

1. Scrub potatoes, leaving the skin on.
2. With a fork pierce the skin no more than 1/4" deep. Arrange potatoes on a paper towel, one inch apart.
3. Microwave on high for 4-6 minutes per potato, turning halfway through.
4. Cover with foil.
5. Let stand 5 minutes.

To Boil in the Microwave:

1. Peel potatoes if desired and cut into desired shapes.
2. Place potatoes in a casserole dish with the bottom covered with water and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover.
3. Microwave on high for 4-8 minutes for 4 medium potatoes that are 1-inch cubed, slightly longer for 1/4-inch slices or quarters. The potatoes should be fork tender. Stir halfway through.

Mexican Potato Skins

Yield: 16 pieces

4 large baking potatoes, baked
3 ounces shredded cheddar cheese*
3 ounces shredded monterey jack cheese*
1 cup chopped, peeled tomato
3/4 cup crushed tortilla chips
Sour cream*, optional

Cut each baked potato lengthwise into quarters. Scoop out potato leaving 1/4 inch layer of potato in shell. Place potato skins on lightly greased baking sheet. Combine cheeses and place half of cheese in potato skins. Top with tomato, tortilla chips, and remaining cheese. Bake at 350° F for 6-8 minutes or until cheese melts. Serve with sour cream, if desired.

Nutrition Information:

Serving size: 1/4 potato
Calories: 90
Protein: 4 g
Carbohydrate: 10 g
Fat: 4 g
Sodium: 95 mg

**Low-fat cheese and sour cream may be used as substitutes.*

Vegetable Potato Salad

Yield: 10 servings

4 medium potatoes, cooked, peeled, and sliced
7 ounces whole kernel corn, drained
1/2 cup celery, sliced
1/2 cup carrots, thinly sliced
1/4 cup radishes, sliced
1/4 cup green pepper, chopped
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1 medium tomato, cut into eight wedges

Dressing:

3/4 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt
Dash pepper
1 tablespoon vinegar
2 teaspoons prepared mustard

In small bowl, combine all dressing ingredients and blend well. In large bowl, combine all salad ingredients except tomato wedges. Combine dressing and salad mixture, cover and refrigerate. Garnish with tomato wedges. Reduced calorie mayonnaise would cut the fat in this recipe by 1/3.

Nutrition Information

Serving Size: 1/2 cup
Calories: 200
Protein: 2g
Carbohydrate: 20 g
Fat: 13 g
Cholesterol: 10 mg
Sodium: 240 mg

Scalloped Potatoes

Yield: 6 servings

5 tablespoons margarine
1 cup finely chopped onion
5 tablespoons flour
2-1/2 cups skim milk, heated
1-1/2 teaspoons grated lemon rind
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
2 pounds potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
3 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
2 tablespoons grated Romano cheese

In a medium saucepan, heat margarine over medium heat. Sauté onions until translucent. Stir in flour and cook 3 minutes, stirring often. Add milk and cook until sauce is thickened, stirring constantly. Add lemon rind, salt, pepper, and parsley. Remove from heat. Arrange potatoes in lightly greased 8 x 8 baking dish. Pour sauce over potatoes and sprinkle cheese on top. Bake at 325°F for 1-1/2 hours.

Nutrition Information

Serving Size: 1/2 cup
Calories: 283
Protein: 8 g
Carbohydrate: 40 g
Fat: 11 g
Cholesterol: 4 mg
Sodium: 289 mg

Hot German Potato Salad

Yield: 6 servings

Sauce for Scalloped Potatoes
4 slices crisp done bacon, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
3 tablespoons sliced green onions
Dash pepper

Prepare the sauce for scalloped potatoes. Stir in bacon, vinegar, onions, and pepper. Then bake as directed for scalloped potatoes.

Nutrition Information

Serving size: 1/2 cup
Calories: 317
Protein: 10 g
Carbohydrate: 42 g
Fat: 13 g
Cholesterol: 8 mg
Sodium: 357 mg