

# POTATOES

**Spanish:** papas **Russian:** kartofel' (картофель) **Vietnamese:** khoai tây

Although residents of the United States have fallen in love with potatoes, they are native to South America. Introduced in the US in the 18th century from Irish immigrants, potatoes were first cultivated in the Andes Mountains over 7,000 years ago. There are hundreds of varieties of potatoes worldwide, in many shapes, colors, and sizes. They are durable, store and travel well, and provide nutrition at a low cost.



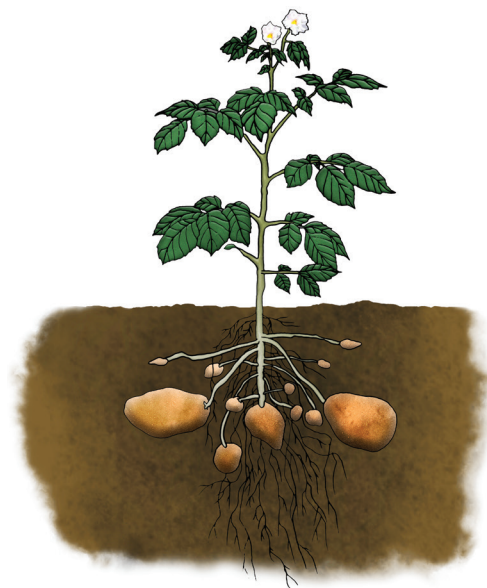
**FIND OUT MORE:**

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/potato.html>

[http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/download/Summer/Potatoes/Potatoes\\_Educator's-Newsletter.pdf](http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/download/Summer/Potatoes/Potatoes_Educator's-Newsletter.pdf)

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## FROM SEED TO PLATE



Potatoes are annual tubers produced for their starchy flesh. Above-ground, the plant grows yellow-green flowers, while below-ground stems called “stolons” branch out and swell, producing what we know as the potato. As the season continues, excess starch produced by the above ground plant is sent to the stolons to form the tubers so that they grow larger into potatoes.

**FIND OUT MORE:**

[http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/download/Summer/Potatoes/Potatoes\\_Educator's-Newsletter.pdf](http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/download/Summer/Potatoes/Potatoes_Educator's-Newsletter.pdf)

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## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2007, Oregon growers produced almost 20 million sacks on 36,500 acres making potatoes the #1 crop grown in Oregon!

<http://oregonstate.edu/potatoes/orprod.htm>

## IN THE GARDEN

Potatoes are fun to grow in childcare gardens, as children love to discover and dig up the tubers in the dirt! You can plant them in the ground or in large containers.



**SUN:** Full Sun.



**WATER:** Water regularly when freshly planted, then occasionally once established. Do not water during the last 3-4 weeks before harvest, to keep the roots from splitting.



**SOIL:** Soil should be high in organic matter with good drainage.



**SEEDS:** Potatoes are grown from seed pieces (which are parts of potatoes) or whole potatoes. You will need to order these or get them from a nearby nursery. Before planting, make sure there are at least a few good “eyes” or sprouts on the potato.



**PLANT:** Potatoes like to be “hilled” when planted. To do this, dig a large enough hole for the plant and add extra soil to the base of the plant. Alternatively, dig a furrow to plant in.



**SPACE:** Plant seed pieces 10-12 inches apart in rows 24-36 inches apart.



**CARE:** Water regularly, stopping 3-4 weeks before harvest to allow the tubers to dry up a bit.



**HARVEST:** Potatoes are some of the earliest vegetables planted in the early spring when the soil has begun to dry and warm up. Harvest can begin in mid-June and extend through August, depending on the planting time and variety. Mid- and late-season potatoes can be planted as late as July 1.

Note: Potato plants and leaves are poisonous.

### FIND OUT MORE:

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/potato.cfm>

## STORAGE AND HANDLING

- Avoid potatoes that are pocked with soft, brown or moldy spots or are sprouting
- Avoid potatoes that are have a green hue
- Store potatoes in a dark, cool cabinet or drawer. It is best not to store them in the refrigerator!
- If kept in cool (55-60 degrees) storage, potatoes can keep for 1-3 months
- If kept at room temperature, use within 1 week of purchase

### FIND OUT MORE:

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/5529.pdf>

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/potato.html>

## IN THE KITCHEN

Potatoes already have strong presence in the kitchen for good reason – they are delicious! There are plenty of preparation methods that can be used, such as cutting them into large wedges, tossing with olive oil, salt and pepper and broiling or roasting them in the oven. Potatoes can be sliced in large, vertical discs, covered in oil, salt and pepper and grilled. Small whole potatoes can be steamed lightly, removed from steam, and smashed, after which they can be sautéed in olive oil, chili powder and fresh lemon; they can be boiled for everyone's favorite feasting side dish – mashed potatoes! Most of the nutrients in potatoes can be found just below the surface of the skin – so avoid peeling when possible.

Try the classroom recipe at home, with this family-size version. Use a mix of sweet potatoes and potatoes for a special treat:

### SWEET POTATO MASH

Serves 6

#### INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. sweet potatoes (4-6 medium)

3/4 tsp. salt

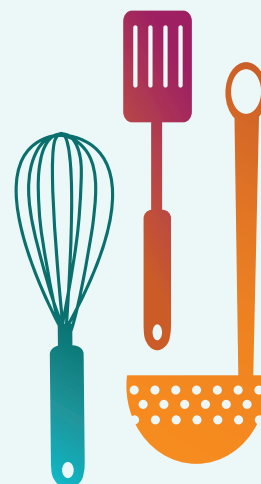
black pepper (to taste)

2 Tbs. butter or milk (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Put a medium pot of water on to boil. Scrub sweet potatoes and peel.\* Cut sweet potatoes in quarters. When water boils, add sweet potatoes to pot. Lower heat, and simmer sweet potatoes until tender (about 20 minutes).
2. Mash sweet potatoes with a fork. Using a metal whisk with an up-and-down motion also works well. Add the butter or milk, if desired. Season with salt and pepper. Enjoy!

\*Note: When sweet potatoes are exposed to air, they begin to brown. To keep raw sweet potatoes from browning, soak them in water with a little lemon juice or vinegar.



## FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The family newsletter for sweet potatoes & potatoes can be sent home at the beginning of the month. The newsletter is available in English, Spanish, and Russian. Print the first page only, or add photos and stories to the second page and print both sides for families.



### GET PARENTS' ATTENTION!

- Attach the newsletter to the child by attaching a string of yarn to the paper and making a newsletter “necklace” or pinning the newsletter to an article of clothing.
- Attach the newsletter to a drawing or other piece of artwork created by the child
- Get a set of “Ask me about \_\_\_\_” stickers or nametags, or use blank nametag stickers to draw attention to the fruit or vegetable of the month. Send each child home with an “Ask me about sweet potatoes and potatoes!” sticker for the sweet potato and potato month.
- Offer tastes of the recipe of the month at a parent meeting, or when parents pick up their children from your site.

## POTATO VARIETIES



Russet • Red • Yukon Gold • Blue • Fingerling



## ABOUT HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS

Harvest for Healthy Kids is a nutrition program designed to introduce children to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables through their meals and snacks and classroom activities. Monthly family newsletters engage families as partners in helping children to develop healthy eating habits. Harvest for Healthy Kids is a partnership between Mt. Hood Community College Head Start and the School of Community Health at Portland State University.