



FACT SHEET

Family and Consumer Sciences

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Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Potatoes

Potatoes are a favorite food of just about everyone! They are versatile, economical, relatively low in calories, and rate well on the nutritional scale. The four basic types of potatoes are round whites, long whites, russets, and round reds. In Ohio, potatoes are available from mid-July to mid-October and in storage year-round.

For information on potato varieties in Ohio, contact your county Extension educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Selection

- Potatoes should be fairly clean, firm, and smooth with a regular shape so there won't be too much waste in peeling.
- Avoid potatoes with wilted, wrinkled skin, soft dark areas, cut surfaces, or with a green appearance.
- Choose potatoes of uniform size for even cooking.

Storage

- Store potatoes in a cool, dry, dark place that's well ventilated. The ideal temperatures are 45 to 50 degrees F.
- At 45 to 50 degrees F potatoes will keep well for several weeks. At temperatures much over that, potatoes should not be stored for more than one week. Warmer temperatures encourage sprouting and shriveling. (Sprouting potatoes can still be used but there will be some waste. Remove sprouts and eyes completely. Peel before cooking.)

- Avoid prolonged exposure to light, which causes potatoes to turn green. This green area should be pared off before the potato is used.
- Don't refrigerate potatoes. Below 40 degrees F potatoes will develop a sweet taste, the result of an accumulation of sugars in the tubers. This increased sugar will cause the potato to darken when cooked.

Yield

Due to many variables, including moisture content, size, and variety, it is impossible to give specific recommendations as to quantity to buy. The following recommendations are approximations.

- 1 pound fresh potatoes equals:
 - about 3 medium potatoes
 - 3 cups peeled and sliced
 - 2½ cups peeled and diced
 - 2 cups mashed
 - 2 cups French fries
- 1 bushel equals 60 pounds and fills 18–22 quarts
- 2 pounds medium potatoes equals about 6 servings potato salad (1 potato per serving)

Nutrition

The "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" recommend that adults need 2–2½ cups of a variety of vegetables daily. Potatoes are a good choice to help meet this requirement, and provide antioxidants that help prevent cancer. They are a good source of vitamins. A medium-size potato (3 per pound) provides 1/3 the vitamin C

recommended daily for an average adult. Potatoes also supply thiamin, niacin, iron, carbohydrates, and small amounts of vegetable protein.

Potatoes are low in sodium, virtually fat free, and easy to digest. Eating the skin adds fiber to the diet. They are highly acceptable in almost any diet.

Safe Handling

Clean surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat and poultry and before you use them on fresh produce. Wash potatoes just before using. To remove dirt, wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water. Do not use soap, dish detergent, or bleach since these household products are not approved for human consumption. Gently scrub potatoes with a vegetable brush or cellulose sponge to clean. Give special attention to cleaning around blemishes and indentations. Remove bad spots.

Serving

Preparation Tips

- Leaving skin on potatoes during cooking is an excellent way to conserve their nutrients (unless potatoes have sprouted—see section on storage).
- If potatoes are peeled before cooking, use a vegetable parer, keeping peelings as thin as possible, since some of the potato's nutrients are found close to the skin.

Cooking Tips

- Potatoes retain nutrients better if cooked whole. However, they may be halved, sliced, or diced before cooking if shorter cooking time is desired.
- Peeled potatoes turn dark if not cooked right away. To protect their whiteness, toss them with ascorbic acid mixture or a little lemon juice. Prolonged soaking of potatoes in cold water is not recommended as it can result in some vitamin loss.

The Fattening Image

All too often the potato is guilty by association with high calorie toppings like butter, sour cream, gravy, and mayonnaise dressing. Just one tablespoon of butter will double the number of calories in a baked potato! There are many low-calorie ways to prepare potatoes deliciously. Here are just a few tasty low-calorie topping ideas:

- Toasted sesame seeds
- Whipped butter and poppy seeds
- A spoonful of stewed tomatoes and a bit of grated cheese
- Melted butter or margarine thinned with lemon juice
- A mix of dried herbs: parsley, chives, basil, dill
- Mock sour cream (cottage cheese and lemon juice whipped in blender)
- Chopped onion with coarsely grated black pepper
- Chive-spiked yogurt

Basic Cooking Methods

- Boil potatoes in a saucepan with a tight-fitting lid in about one inch water until fork tender (30–40 minutes).
- Bake potatoes for 45 minutes at 400 degrees F or bake them along with whatever you have in the oven and adjust the time according to the temperature. It can range from 325 to 450 degrees F. Piercing the skin of each potato with the tines of a fork before baking allows steam to escape and prevents the potato from bursting.

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