



Sweet Potatoes

Fact Sheet



Where did they come from?

Sweet potatoes are native of Central and South America where they served as a staple for the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. Sweet potato remains have been found in caves in Peru, which date back 10,000 to 20,000 years. Christopher Columbus was the first to introduce sweet potatoes to Europe while later explorers introduced sweet potatoes to Asia. They were also a main source of nourishment for early colonial Americans and for soldiers during the Revolutionary War.

Where do they grow?

North Carolina, Louisiana, California, Georgia and New Jersey are the major states for growing sweet potatoes. The major suppliers of sweet potatoes include China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Uganda.

How do they grow?

Sweet potatoes are tropical tubers and are part of the Morning Glory Family. They grow underground just as a carrot and, therefore, are considered to be storage roots. Sweet potatoes generally grow the size of a regular white potato and contain a smooth, thin skin. They are available all year long, but are most abundant in the fall and early winter.

Are they healthy?

- 👉 Contain calcium, potassium, vitamins A, B6 and C
- 👉 Contain virtually no fat and are sodium free
- 👉 Good source of dietary fiber
- 👉 Rated as #1 most nutritional vegetable by the “Center for Science in the Public Interest” (CSPI)

How do you pick a good one?

- 👉 Choose those with a firm, dark, smooth skin
- 👉 Avoid sweet potatoes with wrinkled skins
- 👉 Do not choose those with bruises, sprouts or decayed spots

☺ FUN FACTS! ☺

Sweet Potatoes

Did you know...

- ☺ **Did you know a serving of sweet potatoes contains 327% of your daily need for vitamin A? (More than any other vegetable!)**
- ☺ **Did you know that sweet potatoes and yams are not the same?**
(Yams come from the Yam family and are tubers, like potatoes, while sweet potatoes are considered storage roots, like carrots. Yams also have rough, scaly skin while sweet potatoes have a smooth, thin skin. Yams can grow as long as 7 feet and can weigh up to 150 pounds while sweet potatoes are usually the size of a regular potato. Yams are primarily grown in the Caribbean while sweet potatoes grow in the U.S. Yams do not contain any vitamin A while sweet potatoes are super rich in this vitamin.)
- ☺ **Did you know that there are two varieties of sweet potatoes, pale yellow with a dry flesh and dark orange with a moist flesh?**
- ☺ **Did you know that the orange fleshed sweet potato is the primary one sold in the U.S.?**
- ☺ **Did you know you can eat sweet potatoes raw with dip?**
(They taste like a sweet carrot. They are a super healthy snack!)
- ☺ **Did you know you can eat sweet potato fries?**
(Much healthier than the common white potato French fry!)
- ☺ **Did you know you can also eat baked sweet potatoes?**
- ☺ **Did you know that when you eat a sweet potato you are actually eating a root?**
- ☺ **Did you know that ½ cup of sweet potatoes provides 1 serving from the vegetable group of the Food Guide Pyramid?**
- ☺ **Did you know that sweet potatoes are one of the most nutritious vegetables you can eat as part of your 5 a Day?**
- ☺ **Did you know sweet potatoes should not be refrigerated?**
(If refrigerated, they will develop a hard core and a bad taste. Store in a cool, dry place with temperatures between 55°-60° F.)

Remember ... Include 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day!