

History

The sweet potato is a tuberous root vegetable which belongs to the same plant family as the morning-glory. Native to Central America, sweet potatoes have been cultivated in the southern United States since the 16th century.

What's the difference between sweet potatoes and yams? In the U.S., the term is used interchangeably. The United States Department of Agriculture requires that products labeled as "yams" also be identified as sweet potatoes.

Storage Tips

- Sweet potato growers usually cure them – hold them at a high temperature and humidity for about 10 days – before sending them to market. Curing helps preserve sweet potatoes and enhances their sweetness.
- Store in a dry, unrefrigerated bin. Storing at 55-60 degrees is best.
- DO NOT REFRIGERATE. Chilling this tropical vegetable will give it a hard core and an undesirable taste when cooked.
- Freshly dug or uncured potatoes are better boiled and used in dishes that include fruit or syrup.

Preparation Tips

- Scrub sweet potatoes under cold running water just before cooking.
- To bake sweet potatoes, scrub them then dry completely. Rub them lightly in oil but do not place in aluminum foil. Pierce potatoes with a fork and place them on a

Purchasing Tips

- Arkansas sweet potatoes are available from August through October.
- For the greatest food value, choose sweet potatoes with a deep orange color.
- Select firm, well-shaped roots with smooth, bright, uniformly colored skins.
- Avoid sweet potatoes with holes or cuts which cause decay.
- 3 medium sweet potatoes equal approximately 2 cups of cooked and mashed sweet potatoes or a one-pound can.

baking sheet. Bake in a 400-degree oven for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to 375 degrees and bake until potatoes are soft.

- Sweet potatoes can also be "baked" in a microwave oven. Wash, pierce and place on a paper towel. Cook on high for 5-9 minutes for two potatoes. Let stand for 3 minutes. One baked medium sweet potato (3½ ounces) has about 103 calories.
- Typical seasonings include small amounts of butter or brown sugar, apple, orange or pineapple juice, orange peel, nutmeg, cinnamon or ginger.

Nutritional Value

Sweet potatoes are often referred to as a nutritional powerhouse because they are high in beta-carotene – an antioxidant that may reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers. They are a good source of vitamin B-6, vitamin C, potassium and dietary fiber.

One medium baked sweet potato:

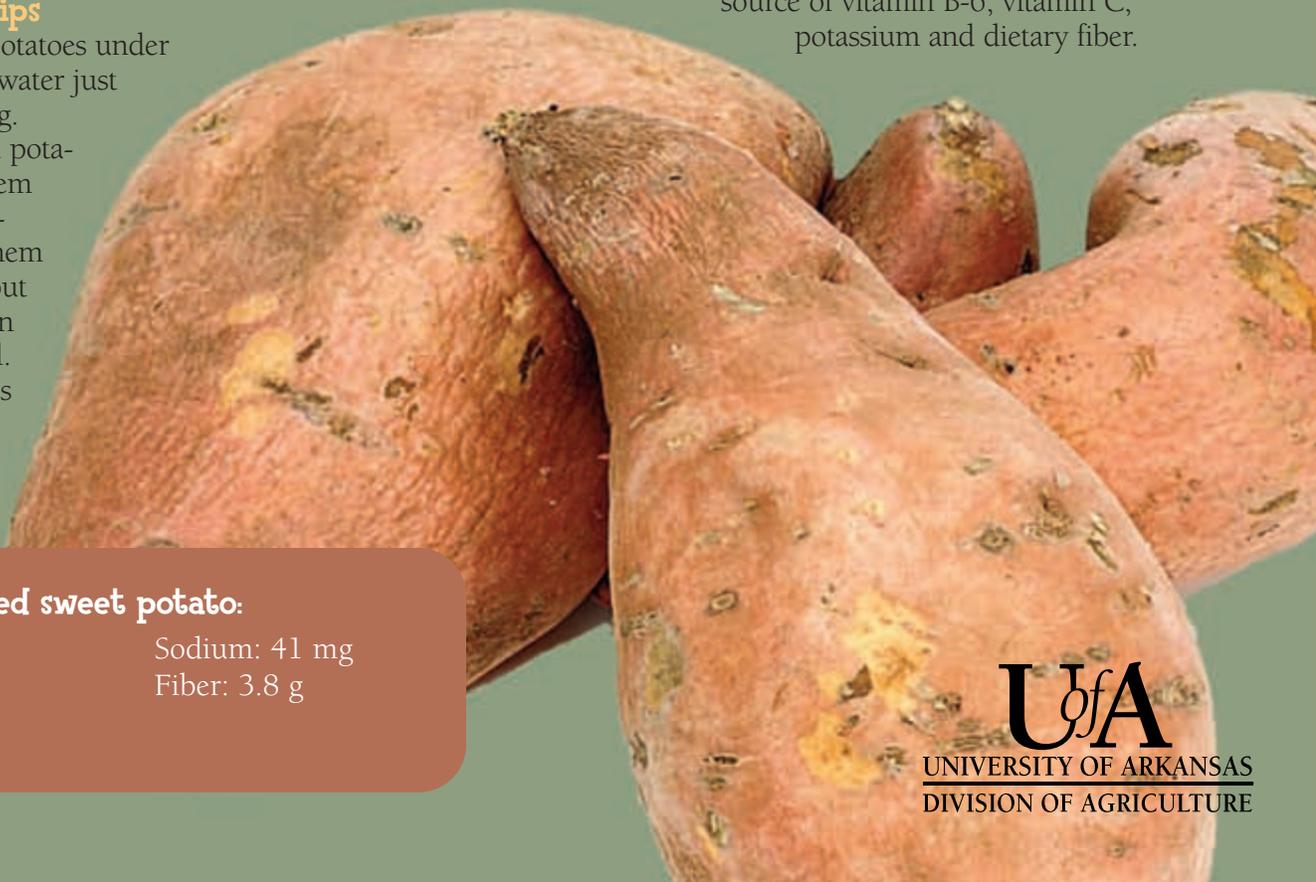
Calories: 103

Fat: 0.2 g

Carbohydrate: 24 g

Sodium: 41 mg

Fiber: 3.8 g



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Sweet potatoes are high in beta carotene and are a good source of vitamin B 6, vitamin C, potassium and dietary fiber.

Recipes

Bright Idea

For a sweet and savory taste, use half white potatoes and half sweet potatoes to make roasted or mashed potatoes and potato salad.

Sweet Potato Oven Fries

4 medium sweet potatoes
Nonstick vegetable oil spray
2 tablespoons oil
Optional Seasonings:
Mix equal parts ground nutmeg and cinnamon
Mix $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon each paprika, garlic flakes and salt with a pinch of cayenne pepper
Preheat oven to 475°F.

Lightly spray a baking sheet with the nonstick vegetable oil spray. Wash potatoes thoroughly and dry with a paper towel. Cut the potatoes into long strips about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Put oil in a plastic bag. Add potatoes and toss to evenly coat with oil. You may add seasoning to the bag. Spread strips in a single layer on the baking sheet and place in preheated oven. Bake at 475°F for 40 minutes, turning once. Serves 6. Serving size: 10 fries.

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories: 130
Total Fat: 5 g
Carbohydrate: 21 g
Sodium: 10 mg
Dietary Fiber: 3 g

Source: *Cooking With Extension*

Glazed Sweet Potatoes

Preparation time: 50 minutes

1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick slices
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Spray a 1-quart baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Place potato slices in the prepared baking dish.
3. In a small bowl, combine cornstarch, brown sugar, orange juice and water. Stir well.
4. Pour mixture over potato slices.
5. Cover and bake for 40 minutes or until potato slices are tender and glaze is thickened.

Number of servings: 8

Cups of fruits or vegetables per serving: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Nutrition information for $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving:

Calories: 90
Fat: 0 g
Sodium: 33 mg
Carbohydrate: 21 g
Dietary Fiber: 2 g

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Enjoy Arkansas' Fresh Sweet Potatoes