



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

SWEET POTATOES



Sweet potatoes are a root vegetable that grow underground. They are part of the morning glory or Convolvulaceae family. Sweet potatoes are native to Central and South America and have been cultivated for over 5,000 years. Sweet potatoes were brought to Europe by Spanish explorers in the late 1400s. Sweet potatoes have an earthy, sweet, nutty taste. They can be baked, roasted, boiled, steamed, microwaved, or sautéed. In Michigan, sweet potatoes are usually harvested in September.



SWEET POTATOES ARE

- An excellent source of vitamin A. Vitamin A plays an important role in the healing process and eye health.
- A good source of fiber. Fiber helps us feel fuller and benefits the digestive and cardiovascular systems.
- A source of potassium. Potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure.

MICHIGAN MADE

Sweet potatoes grow well along the shoreline of West Michigan, particularly in Berrien and Ottawa counties. Michigan farmers grow a variety of sweet potato varieties such as Beauregard, Carolina Ruby, Centennial, Covington, and Georgia Jet.



FUN FACTS

- Sweet potatoes are available in a variety of colors. The skins can be shades of brown, orange, red, or yellow. The inside flesh can be creamy white, shades of orange, or deep purple.
- Sweet potatoes with red, pink, and orange skins are the sweetest.
- Like potatoes, cooked sweet potatoes skins are edible and nutritious.
- [Dr. George Washington Carver \(1864–1943\)](#) was the most prominent African American scientist of the 20th Century. He developed more than 100 uses for sweet potatoes such as candies, coffee, dyes, flour, hog feed, ink, medicine, mints, paints, paper, and yeast at the Tuskegee Institute where he did his research and was a professor for 47 years.
- According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the world's heaviest sweet potato weighed 81 pounds 9 ounces and was grown in 2004 by Manuel Pérez Pérez in Güime, Lanzarote, Spain.
- Sweet potato pie originated in African American communities in the American South and remains the traditional Thanksgiving pie in the South and for many African American families nationwide.

BUYING AND STORING

- Select dry, firm sweet potatoes with smooth skins and no bruises.
- Store potatoes in a cool dry place, not in the refrigerator, up to one month. If kept at room temperature, use within one week.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using. Wash and scrub sweet potatoes thoroughly with a vegetable scrubber to remove dirt just before using.



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MORE THAN FRESH

In addition to fresh, sweet potatoes are available frozen and canned. When buying packaged sweet potatoes, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low-sodium (salt), or no salt added, low in saturated fat, with no added sugar.

EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Sweet potatoes are part of the Vegetable Group. Most people need 2–3 cups of vegetables per day. For more information visit: myplate.gov.



IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

SMOTHERED SWEET POTATOES

Time: 15–20 minutes | Makes: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 sweet potato with toppings

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 232, Carbohydrate 42g, Dietary Fiber 9g, Protein 11g, Total Fat 2g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 3mg, Sodium 226mg



INGREDIENTS

4 medium sweet potatoes

One 15-ounce can reduced or low-sodium, or no salt added black beans, drained and rinsed

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup salsa

$\frac{1}{2}$ jalapeño pepper, finely diced (optional)

$\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup reduced-fat shredded cheese, any kind

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pierce each sweet potato several times with a fork. Place in microwave and cook on high until tender, about 10–15 minutes. Carefully remove hot sweet potatoes, set aside to rest.
2. Combine beans, salsa, and jalapeño (optional) in medium microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 2–3 minutes.
3. Slice sweet potatoes lengthwise, mash the flesh in the middle to create space for the bean topping.
4. Add bean topping and 1–2 tablespoons of cheese to each sweet potato and serve.

Always wash hands before preparing food. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.

CHANGE IT UP

- Top with chili, shredded lettuce, and salsa.
- Top with chives and a dollop of sour cream or plain Greek yogurt.
- Go Greek. Top with garbanzo beans, chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, red onions, kalamata olives, feta cheese, and tzatziki sauce.

TRY THIS

- Add sweet potatoes to classic mashed potatoes.
- Add diced sweet potatoes to casseroles, grain bowls, soups, and stews.
- Use sweet potatoes in recipes as a replacement for pumpkin or potatoes.