

Potato

Growing & Harvesting

Grow. Plant only Montana Certified Seed Potatoes two weeks before last frost and when soil temperatures are above 40°F. Avoid areas where you have planted tomatoes, peppers, or eggplant in previous years. Cut seed potatoes into pieces about one inch across with each piece having at least two “eyes.” Dig a deep (up to 12 inches) trench four inches wide. Place seed with eyes up, 8-12 inches apart and cover with soil. Space trenches two feet apart. Use row covers to protect from early season insects such as flea beetles. Water heavily the first eight weeks with 1-2 inches of water per week or more. For more growing information look for the MontGuide, *Planting a Successful Home Vegetable Garden* at www.msuxextension.org or contact your Extension office.

Harvest. Potato harvest occurs when tops have died down and ground is dry. Be careful not to bruise when digging or storing.



Selection

Whatever the variety, look for potatoes which are firm, and fairly clean. Avoid those with wrinkled or wilted skins, soft dark areas, discoloration, cut or bruised surfaces, or greening. Choose the variety with the end use in mind, see chart on second page for ideas.

Storage

Best when stored in a dark, cool area, 42 to 48°F, with good ventilation. Do not refrigerate or freeze. Avoid placing potatoes in direct light. Temperatures warmer than 45°F encourage sprouting and shriveling; colder than 42°F encourages transformation of starch to sugar, which changes the taste and cooking properties.

Nutrition Information

Most vegetables are rich in fiber and phytochemicals, but provide negligible amounts of saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, and sodium and are gluten-free. Potatoes are a good source of potassium, Vitamin C, Vitamin B6 and magnesium with 54 calories per half-cup serving.

Uses

Bake. Rinse and scrub potatoes. Allow to dry slightly. To prevent a crispy skin, rub with olive oil or butter. Pierce potato with a fork prior to baking to allow steam to escape. Place in 400°F oven and bake 45 minutes or until tender.

Boil or Steam. Rinse, peel (if desired), and cut potatoes in 1- to 2-inch cubes into steamer or pan of boiling water. Steam or boil about 20-30 minutes for cubed potatoes and 30-40 minutes for whole potatoes. To mash, use a hand held mixer or masher until desired consistency. Add seasonings to enhance flavor.

Microwave. Pierce a medium-size potato with a fork before placing on a paper towel in the microwave. Cook on high for 4-6 minutes, until tender.

Roast. Chop potatoes into 1/2-inch sections or long strips, place in plastic bag and shake with olive oil to coat. Spread on baking sheet and roast at 450°F for 30-40 minutes, turning frequently.

Season. To enhance the flavor of potatoes, use basil, bay leaf, celery seed, chives, curry powder, dill weed, garlic, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano, rosemary, tarragon and/or thyme.

Preserve. For more information on preserving potatoes, look for MontGuides: *Freezing Vegetables*; *Drying Vegetables*; and *Home-Canning Pressures and Processing Times*. Visit www.msuxextension.org/nutrition and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension office.

Food Safety Tips

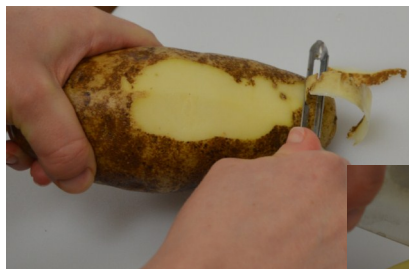
1. **Clean.** Wash hands and food contact surfaces before and after preparation.
2. **Chill.** Keep produce and food cool and chill promptly.
3. **Separate.** Keep produce and food separate from raw meats and eggs.
4. **Cook.** Cook food to a safe temperature.

Questions? Click on www.foodsafety.gov

Preparation: Step-by-Step



Wash hands. Thoroughly rinse potatoes to remove dirt.
Re-rinse and scrub potato, if needed. Pat dry.



Peel skin off with knife or vegetable peeler, if desired.
Remove blemishes with a paring knife. Cut potato in half. Place cut side down and slice to desired thickness.



Cut slices again to dice to desired size or to recipe instructions.



Store peeled or cut potatoes in cold water.
Cover completely to prevent browning.

Uses for different potato varieties:

Russet	Red	White
Bake, mash, French fry, roast	Boil, steam, roast, sauté, scalloped/au gratin, soups, salads	Boil, steam, mash, French fry, roast, scalloped/au gratin, soups, salads
Yellow	Blue/Purple	Fingerling
Mash, steam, bake, boil, roast, French fry	Boil, steam, bake, microwave	Boil, bake, steam

For More Information:

Montana State University Extension: www.msuextension.org
MSU Extension Master Gardener: www.mtmastergardener.org
MSU Extension Food and Nutrition: www.msuextension.org/nutrition
MSU Extension Nutrition Education Programs: www.buyeatlivebetter.org
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Fruits & Veggies More Matters. (2012). Potato: Nutrition. selection. storage. <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/Potato>
Spice Advice. (2013). Spice usage tips. <http://www.spiceadvice.com/news/usage/chart.html>
Washington State Potato Commission. (2013). Washington State Potatoes. <http://www.potatoes.com>