

February – Featured Vegetable: POTATO

WASH. PEEL. EAT.



(how easy is that?)



Hello! I'm Patrick Potato, and I'm a Russet potato. <sup>1</sup>

It's easy to tell because of my oblong shape, brown skin on the outside and white color on the inside. Did you know that every American eats about 126 pounds of potatoes a year? It's no wonder Russet potatoes are the most popular – they're perfect for baking and are TASTY!

## Facts

The common potato is related to the tomato, eggplant and pepper and its botanical name is *Solanum tuberosum*.

Potatoes are one of the largest food crops in the world.

The United States grows about 35 billion pounds of potatoes every year.

Potatoes are the most popular vegetable among Americans. Potatoes are included in one out of every three meals that Americans eat. Every American eats about 126 pounds of potatoes a year. Baked potatoes are the most popular way Americans like to eat them at home.

The word potato comes from the Caribbean word batata, which meant sweet potato.

## History

It is thought that potatoes came from the Andes Mountains of Peru, where they were planted more than 6,000 years ago by ancestors of the Incas.

Peruvians, the people of Peru, were very proud of their potatoes. They made potato-decorated cooking pots and potato-shaped whistles for kids. Because potatoes have been so important to this region, modern descendants of the Incas, the Quechua Indians, have more than one thousand different names for potatoes.

In the early 1500s, Pizarro and his Spanish explorers discovered potatoes in Ecuador. From here, the explorers brought potatoes to Spain, Italy, and France.

In the late 1500s, potatoes were brought to England from South America.

In 1621, Captain Nathaniel Butler brought potatoes to America. It is believed that Irish settlers in New Hampshire were the first to cultivate potatoes extensively for North America. As more and more Irish immigrants moved to America, the demand for potatoes grew, and potatoes became a major crop in the United States.

---

Source: <sup>1</sup>Dole 5 A Day. [www.dole5aday.com](http://www.dole5aday.com)

February – Featured Vegetable: POTATO

WASH. PEEL. EAT.



(how easy is that?)

---

It wasn't until the 18th century that potatoes became popular in Europe. Potatoes became fashionable when Marie Antionette paraded through the French countryside wearing potato blossoms in her hair.

The Royal Society of London proclaimed potatoes to be a nutritious food for the poor and regarded them as a food for people without status.

The Irish were the first to recognize the food value of potatoes, and in the late 1600s Ireland became the first European country to plant potatoes as a staple food crop.

For the next 200 years, every factory worker received 12 pounds of potatoes every day and a typical family ate more than 250 pounds of potatoes every week.

## Types

There are more than 5,000 varieties of potatoes all with different shapes, sizes, and colors. In the United States, the most common varieties are classified into four types: Long Russets, Long Whites, Round Reds, and Round Whites. There are also special varieties like the Yellow Flesh Potatoes and Blue and Purple Potatoes.

**Long Russet** potatoes are oblong in shape with a dark brown skin on the outside and white on the inside. They are large and can weight more than 18 ounces. Russet potatoes are best when baked or mashed.

**Long White** potatoes are oblong in shape, have a smooth, thin, off-white skin and are white inside. They are good for boiling, steaming, roasting, baking and used in casseroles, soups, and salads. These potatoes are large and on average weigh half a pound.

**Round Red** potatoes have a smooth, thin skin and are white inside with a firm texture. Red Round potatoes are great for boiling, steaming, roasting, baking and used in casseroles, soups, and salads.

**Round White** potatoes are oval in shape and have a light tan skin with an off-white color inside. These potatoes are considered all-purpose and are great for boiling, mashing, steaming, roasting, and baking. On average, it takes about 3 round white potatoes to equal one pound.

**Yellow Flesh** potatoes are most available in late summer and early fall. They are yellow inside with a mild butter flavor. The rich flavor of these potatoes tastes best when baked, mashed or roasted.

**Blue and Purple** potatoes are most available in the fall. The color inside these potatoes ranges from dark blue or lavender to white. They have a delicate, nutty flavor and taste best when microwaved, steamed, or baked.

## Nutrients

- A good source of vitamins C and B<sub>6</sub> and a source of potassium

Source: <sup>1</sup>Dole 5 A Day. [www.dole5aday.com](http://www.dole5aday.com)