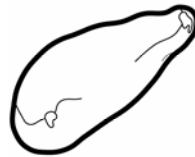


NOVEMBER – Featured Fruit: SWEET POTATOES



WASH. COOK. EAT.

(how easy is that?)

The sweet potato is a smooth-skinned, oblong tropical tuber which is not related to the white potato. Instead, it is a member of the morning glory family. The sweet potato's smooth skin may vary from pale yellow to vivid orange to deep purple, depending on the variety. The sweet flesh may be light yellow, pink, red, or deep orange.

Facts

Sweet potatoes are a Native American plant that was the main source of nourishment for early homesteaders and for soldiers during the Revolutionary War.

Sweet potatoes are often confused with yams, but yams are large, starchy roots grown in Africa and Asia. Yams can grow up to 100 pounds and are not common in American supermarkets. Nutritionally, sweet potatoes greatly outweigh yams. Because of the common use of the term "yam," it is acceptable to use this term when referring to sweet potatoes.

Sweet potatoes contain an enzyme that converts most of its starches into sugars as the potato matures. This sweetness continues to increase during storage and when they are cooked.

History

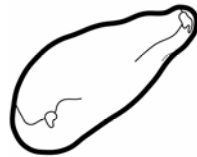
Sweet potatoes are believed to have been domesticated in Central and South America nearly 5,000 years ago. They then spread to Mexico, the Caribbean, the West Indies and parts of North America. When Christopher Columbus landed on America's shores in 1492, the Native Americans were growing sweet potatoes. Columbus and his men loved the tasty sweet potatoes so much that they brought them back to Europe to grow their own, where they continued to increase in popularity. The Spanish began cultivating sweet potatoes immediately. Soon they were profitably exporting sweet potatoes to England where they were included in spice pies to be devoured at the court of Henry VIII. The French, not to be outdone, planted them at the request of Louis XV. After his death, the popularity of the sweet potato staggered for 30 years. Finally, the Portuguese carried sweet potatoes to Asia and Africa where they have become an important dietary staple. In the United States, the sweet potato was a main source of nourishment for early homesteaders and for soldiers during the American Revolution and Civil War. The Pilgrims and Native Americans even ate sweet potatoes at the first Thanksgiving feast.

Sources:

www.harvestofthemonth.com

Encyclopedia of Foods: A Guide to Healthy Nutrition. Dole Food Company: 2002.

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Where Grown

Sweet potatoes are cultivated in many parts of the world. Major supplies include China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Uganda. In the United States, sweet potatoes rank 10th among vegetables grown. North Carolina, Louisiana, California, and Georgia are the major suppliers.

Types

There are two varieties of sweet potatoes: the pale yellow with a dry flesh and the dark orange with a moist flesh. The dark orange variety is plumper in shape and somewhat sweeter than the yellow variety. Beauregard, Garnet, and Jewel are varieties that are normally called "yams" in the United States.

Nutrients

- Fresh sweet potatoes are high in vitamin A (beta-carotene) and vitamin C.
- They are a good source of vitamin B₆, potassium, and fiber.

Sources:

www.harvestofthemonth.com

Encyclopedia of Foods: A Guide to Healthy Nutrition. Dole Food Company: 2002.