



Potato Storage and Care

In Search of the Perfect Potato

Americans have a love affair with potatoes – they continually top the list for the most frequently consumed vegetable (1). Learn how to keep your prized potato in top form with the following tips:

Selection

When shopping, select firm, smooth potatoes. Avoid those with wrinkled or wilted skins, soft dark areas, cut surfaces or those green in appearance. If you need several potatoes for a recipe, choose ones similar in size for even cooking.

Storage

Potatoes should be kept in a cool, dark place with good ventilation. The ideal storage temperature is 45 to 50°F. At these temperatures, potatoes will keep for several weeks. But don't store potatoes in the refrigerator! When kept below 40°F, potatoes develop a sweet taste, due to the conversion of starch to sugar. This increased sugar causes potatoes to darken when cooked. If you store potatoes at room temperature, try to use them within a week or so.

Keep potatoes away from prolonged exposure to light, which causes them to turn green. This greening causes a bitter flavor. If potatoes develop green areas or start to sprout, just trim off these areas before using.

Preparation

Potatoes are easier to prepare and healthier with the skins on. Even though potatoes are washed before they reach the market, it's a good idea to rinse and scrub them thoroughly before using.

Sometimes potatoes that are cut and uncooked can take on a pinkish or brownish discoloration. This darkening or discoloration is similar to that of cut apples from exposure to air. It's due to the carbohydrate in the food reacting with oxygen in the air.

Potatoes that become discolored in this way are safe to eat and do not need to be thrown out. The color usually disappears with cooking. Preserve the color of cut potatoes by storing them in cold water. Limit water soaking to two hours to retain water-soluble vitamins.

Leftovers

It's best to refrigerate any leftovers within two hours of serving to prevent foodborne illnesses. Leftovers should be consumed within a few days.

We don't recommend freezing cooked potatoes at home as they become watery upon reheating. The potato is 80 percent water; and when frozen, this water separates from the starch and nutrients.

Potatoes are one of the most versatile, gratifying and pleasing vegetables around. Optimize your potato experience by selecting, preparing and storing them properly.

1) Pennington JAT. *Documentation for the 1995 Nutrition Labeling Values for the 20 Most Frequently Consumed Raw Fruits, Vegetables, and Fish*. Washington, DC: Food and Drug Administration; October 1995, revised June 1996.

For healthy recipes and nutrition information, go to: www.healthypotato.com

