

# YUMMY NORTHWEST

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## Spudtacular!

**This month it's plain and simple: potatoes.** These friendly-looking vegetables are everywhere: almost always on the dinner plate or at a picnic or accompanying eggs and toast at breakfast. Can you imagine the fast food industry without them?

With plenty of fiber and nutrients, the ability to grow almost anywhere, and the versatility to adapt to any type of cooking, a potato perhaps isn't as humble as it looks.

Why not get acquainted with one today?



### What's a spud?

No one is certain how a potato came to be called a "spud." There are many theories, some proven false but still interesting. One such suggestion is that it was named for The Society for the Prevention of an Unwholesome Diet, which in the 19th century aimed to keep British people from eating potatoes. In the 17th century, Scottish ministers had already forbidden Christians to eat potatoes because they are not mentioned in the Bible.

The idea that makes the most sense is that "spud" refers to the digging tool used for potatoes. Originally, a spud was a kind of dagger used in England, but by 1845 it had come to be used for any digging tool, then more particularly for the one used for potatoes.

### A rainbow of colors

White potatoes, red potatoes, yellow potatoes, blue potatoes all have their place on the menu.

The blue potato shown in the photo (top row) is an All Blue, an heirloom variety that comes from Peru, where some of the first potatoes made their appearance.



## National Potato Day October 7

Idaho, of course, grows the most potatoes in the United States, but Washington comes in a close second. Together they produce half of the nation's crop.

While Oregon does not produce a lot of potatoes, its rich volcanic soil (which Washington also has) means that yield-per-acre is superior to Idaho.

As for nutrition, a 5.3-ounce potato with the skin on has more fiber (3 grams) than a slice of wholegrain bread. It also contains 45 percent of the daily requirement for vitamin C and as much potassium as a banana. Most of the nutrients are found in the potato itself, not the skin, but leaving the skin on while cooking helps keep those nutrients intact.

According to the grower at the Wobbly Cart farm in Rochester, Wash., the All Blue will maintain its blue color when cooked and



photo by Mary Rosewood

makes a colorful addition to potato salad. (Editor's note: It cooks a lot faster than other potatoes, so adjust accordingly.)

Yellow potatoes, such as Yukon Gold, are just that, but other potatoes hold the color only in their skin.

### Some history

The Incas in Peru had cultivated potatoes for centuries before Spanish explorers discovered them in 1537 and took them to Europe. There potatoes became an important food source. In the 1700s, European settlers took potatoes to North America. Today, the United States is the world's fourth largest grower of potatoes, behind China, Russia, and India.

More than two-thirds of U.S. potatoes are processed into frozen foods, mostly French fries. (Washington and Oregon potatoes are the best for this type of processing.) A large portion of the rest of the U.S. crop are made into potato chips. The increasing acreage devoted to potatoes in the U.S. is due to the growth in demand for French fries.

### Interesting fact

An apple, an onion, and a potato have the same taste. The difference comes from their smell. Hold your nose closed as you take a bite from each, and you will find they are all in fact sweet.

## Frozen Hash Browns

*No artificial ingredients in these frozen potatoes.*

Cook potatoes in jackets in boiling water until they can just barely be pierced with a fork. Cool in refrigerator. Peel; grate the potatoes using the widest cutting blade [of a food processor]. Press potatoes into a 13-by-9-inch pan to a 3/4-inch layer. Freeze for 10–20 minutes until they begin to firm. Remove from freezer and cut into desired serving sizes. Place in freezer bags and return to freezer. To prepare, fry at low temperature in hot oil until golden brown on both sides.

submitted by Joyce Appel in *From Our House to Yours* by the Dusty (Wash.) BB Club (see middle column to order)



## Oven Fries

*Easy and delicious!*

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Cut potatoes into wedges, any size that looks good as a French fry or steak fry. Toss wedges in a plastic bag containing seasoning of choice (a mixture of onion powder, garlic powder, salt, and freshly ground pepper is pretty nice). Spray a large baking sheet with nonstick spray or cover with foil and place the wedges on it in one layer. Bake about 30 minutes, until brown and crispy.



## Faux Taters

*If there is some reason you can't eat potatoes, try this surprising substitute.*

Steam one head of cauliflower. Puree in a food processor or mash with fork or potato masher. Add to taste any or all of the following: salt; black pepper; roasted garlic; small amount of broth, milk, cream, or butter; grated cheese. If mixture is watery, place in baking dish in 350-degree oven for a few minutes, until liquid evaporates. (Add any cheese after, not before, you put them in the oven.) Serve as is or with gravy.



## Bake, steam, boil, fry, roast, mash, sauté, microwave...

Potatoes have unique properties that make them best for one type of cooking or another. While it can be fun to experiment,

## Look it up

Find more information about potatoes than you thought possible at the following Web sites.

**Idaho Potato Commission**  
[www.idahopotatoes.com](http://www.idahopotatoes.com)  
Idaho® Potatoes (Idaho Russets grown in the state) really are trademarked.

**Oregon Potato Commission**  
[www.oregonspuds.com](http://www.oregonspuds.com)  
The first Oregon potatoes were planted in 1795 near Cape Disappointment. Local Indians preferred their native wapato plant.

**Washington State Potato Commission**  
[www.potatoes.com](http://www.potatoes.com)

Order “cool spud tattoos” on this site. The one pictured shows a Washington-grown potato sporting a Mohawk hairdo, a “Mom” tattoo, and the slogan, “Bad reputation, strong moral fiber.”



## Our House to Yours by the Dusty BB Club

This charming cookbook contains easy-to-make recipes submitted by hard-working women in the Palouse region of Eastern Washington. Members of the Dusty BB (Busy Bees) Club learn new skills, such as quilting or canning, and share their time and energy to support worthy causes.

To order a copy, send \$12 to:

Dusty BB Club  
252 SR 272  
Colfax, Wash. 99111

it can also get confusing. The Washington State Potato Commission has a nice Web page to help you. Check out [www.potatoes.com/RecipesAndCooking.cfm?RecipeSub=SelectionAndCooking](http://www.potatoes.com/RecipesAndCooking.cfm?RecipeSub=SelectionAndCooking) (or go to [www.potatoes.com](http://www.potatoes.com) and click on “Recipes & Cooking,” then “Selection & Cooking”).

## Discoloration

When exposed to air, cut potatoes can turn pink, brown, then gray, but are still OK to eat. To prevent discoloring, place in cold water (add a tablespoon of lemon juice per half gallon) until you need them. Some potatoes develop black spots after cooking; just cut these away if they bother you. If you find a raw potato with a dark spot in the center, cut it away; it was merely affected by temperature changes during growth.

## Storing

Potatoes keep best in a cool (around 45 degrees), dry, dark, well-ventilated place. Don't freeze raw potatoes; they don't cook as well when thawed. Direct light causes green discoloration of the skin that makes it taste bitter and inedible. Refrigerate baked potatoes for storage; at room temperature they grow microorganisms quickly.

## Washing

Don't wash potatoes until you're ready to use them. Then, gently scrub them with warm water (no soap). The Washington State Potato Commission says you can also put them flat in the dishwasher and run through a soapless cycle. (Unlike the chef at the University of Oregon in Eugene who used dish detergent regularly. Very bad.)



## New address!

You can now find us at our very own address at [yummynorthwest.com](http://yummynorthwest.com).

## About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

## Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas, and submissions are all most welcome at [Yummy\\_Northwest@hotmail.com](mailto:Yummy_Northwest@hotmail.com).