

# Potato



## History

Potatoes have been grown in the Peruvian Andes Mountains of South America since 5000 B.C. They are a hardy crop and can grow well in many places- including the mountains, where other staples like rice and wheat do not grow well. In 1570, potatoes were introduced to Europe by Spanish explorers. Peru is still considered the potato capital of the world and they boast an impressive variety of potatoes.

Today, potatoes are the number two world food crop- with rice taking first place. Every state in the United States grows potatoes, with Idaho,

Washington, Wisconsin, Colorado, and North Dakota being the top producers.

Potatoes are an excellent source of fiber and potassium. Your body requires potassium for healthy heart function. The peel contains the bulk of the nutrition and phytochemicals that your body needs. Potatoes are a starchy vegetable, meaning they contain carbohydrates, a basic form of nutrition that gives your body energy.

## Varieties

There are more than 1,000 varieties of potatoes grown world-wide, and more than 100 varieties grown in the US. Potatoes are divided into two categories- waxy and floury.

**Russet potatoes** are floury, have scaly skin, and are referred to as Idaho potatoes.

**Red potatoes** are waxy and ideal for baking, mashing, or making potato salad with.

**White potatoes** are waxy and perfect to add to soups.

**Yellow potatoes** are waxy and include the popular Yukon gold variety.

## Fun Facts

- The University of Wisconsin developed technology enabling NASA to grow the first vegetable in space- a potato- to feed astronauts on long trips.
- Potatoes are available in the state of Washington year round.
- Avoid potatoes with green skin- this may be solanine, a toxin.
- Idaho has named potatoes their state vegetable.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.