

Yam

History

Yams originated in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Africans call yams “nyami,” which is where we get the word “yam.” They are cylindrical and vary in size. Some of the largest yams have weighed more than 100 pounds and have been several feet long. Yams have a dense white, purple, or red flesh and scaly brown skin with dark spots. A yam is starchy and dry. In African culture, it is typically boiled or roasted. They have a shelf-life of six months, but you will have a hard time finding a true yam on a shelf in an American grocery store.

Yams and sweet potatoes are often grouped together. Sweet potato and yam are not interchangeable terms. They have very little in common, other than both being tuber root vegetables. The confusion does not end in America! In Japan the “purple yam” is a mislabeled sweet potato. In Malaysia and Singapore, taro is called “yam,” and in New Zealand the oca tuber is called a “yam.” The sweet potato comes from the morning glory family, while the yam is related to the lily. Yams lack the orange coloring that sweet potatoes have, therefore, they are not a good source of beta-carotene. Yams do supply carbohydrates and fiber, two important nutrients for feeling full and having energy.



Fun Facts

- 54 million tons of yams are farmed in sub-Saharan Africa. This place, called the “yam belt” produces 95 percent of the world’s yams.
- There are more than 150 varieties of yams available world-wide.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.