

RED POTATO



As there's specific interest in bringing potatoes to the desert southwest, research is underway to determine which varieties are more adapted to the Yuma growing environment, including the red potato varieties.

There are more than 5,000 varieties of potatoes in the world. In the United States, the most common variety includes the red potato.

Round, red potatoes belong to the red family of potatoes and include the Red Lasoda and Red Pontiac varieties. Red potatoes have smooth, thin skins and white insides. This type of potato is firm and most easily used in casseroles, soups, salads or boiled, steamed and even roasted.

Red potatoes make a delicious addition to many recipes. These thin skinned vegetables are often easier to peel than white potatoes, and make an attractive, colorful dish. Red potatoes can easily be spiced up with any dried herb or sautéed in favorite oils and dressings.

Try using red potatoes in your favorite potato salad recipes. Due to their thin skins, they don't need to be peeled, which means you'll save time.

Red potatoes are high in fiber if eaten with skins on. Because the skins are so thin, it's always best to try and leave them on when preparing, cooking and handling.

Unlike other potatoes, reds can be easily cooked in many ways. Red potatoes are especially delicious when cooked with moist heat, including the microwave.

Just because you have red potatoes, don't mean they're of the "new" variety. This is a common misconception. New potatoes are defined as prematurely harvested tubers.

Potatoes are naturally high in vitamin C, potassium and fiber.

Red potatoes can be easily grilled or roasted. They're especially delicious with olive oil and nuts. Do not store potatoes in the refrigerator. Refrigeration converts the starch in potatoes to sugar which will cause the potato to darken when cooked.

Red potatoes comprise about 10% of the total potato acreage in the US.

Growers can obtain lower prices if the color of the harvested potatoes is pink or if the color fades during storage. The skin color of red potatoes is due to the presence of anthocyanin pigments in the skin of the potato. Anthocyanins are powerful antioxidants which explain, in part, why fruits and vegetables with colorful skins and pulp are considered nutritious. Research continues to be underway as to the potential range of health benefits from anthocyanins.

Potatoes are generally divided into four basic groups: russet, long white, round white and round red. Loving sandy soil and a cool environment, it takes between 80 and 145 days after planting to harvest red potatoes.

Prolonged exposure to light causes greening and makes the potato taste bitter. Peel or remove green area from the potato before using.

The world's most important vegetable, the potato was first cultivated in the Andean region of South America by native Indian populations. Spanish explorers took the tuber back to Spain in the middle of the 16th Century, and from there it spread to the rest of Europe. The potato was promoted in Prussia by Fredrick the Great, frowned upon in Scotland (Presbyterians were concerned because the Bible failed to mention potatoes as a crop), and quickly adopted by the Irish as their primary food crop.

How potatoes came to North America is the subject of several conflicting legends. One creditable source reports that some of the first plantings were those started in New Hampshire, from stock brought from Ireland.

The present name, potato, came about as an accident, having derived from the Spanish "patata," meaning sweet potato.

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