

2002

Is There More To The Potato Than Just Mashing?

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Recommended Citation

Lauritzen, Georgia, "Is There More To The Potato Than Just Mashing?" (2002). *All Archived Publications*. Paper 324.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/324

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A weekly question/answer column

Is There More To The Potato Than Just Mashing?

Georgia Lauritzen answers:*

A potato is one of the most nutrient-dense foods around. One medium potato (6 to 8 ounces) provides 50 percent of the daily RDA for vitamin C, 15 percent for vitamin B6 and 8 percent for iron, thiamin and folacin. It also contains only 110 calories (without toppings). A potato contains no fat or cholesterol, and is an excellent source of fiber-rich, complex carbohydrates. For only a small expenditure of calories, the potato gives a wide spectrum of valuable nutrients. Since the average person consumes 120 pounds of potatoes annually, consider these new twists for preparation.

- For skinny french fries, peel four medium potatoes and cut them into strips. Spread the strips on a cooking sheet and sprinkle with 2 T salad oil, or toss the strips with the salad oil in a plastic bag to coat. Bake at 450 degrees until brown and tender (about 30-40 minutes), turning frequently. Sprinkle with salt and paprika.
- Dress potato salad with a blend of yogurt, prepared mustard and chopped fresh dill. Or, stuff potato salad into a ripe avocado, a hollowed tomato or a cucumber boat.
- Season your favorite vinaigrette with minced garlic and fresh chopped parsley and chives. Toss with warm cooked potato cubes.
- For variations on the mashed potato, try whipping cooked potatoes with skimmed milk, salt and pepper. Top with yogurt mixed with chives or finely chopped cucumber, dill and minced garlic. Or try stewed tomatoes and coarsely grated cheese, cottage cheese whipped with a little lemon juice, whipped margarine and poppy seeds or salsa. Other toppings include strips of stir fried chicken and vegetables with a dash of teriyaki sauce, crumbled cooked bacon mixed with lightly sauteed apples, or grilled Italian sausages spread with a grainy mustard.
- Potatoes pack a lot of nutrients without packing a big price. Some stores' specials offer a ten pound bag of potatoes for under two dollars.

* Georgia Lauritzen is Utah State University Extension Nutrition Specialist