

Sweet Potatoes are a Super Food...Now That's Sweet



Sweet potatoes can be more than just a Thanksgiving favorite, when prepared without the extra fat and sugar. Sweet potatoes are a naturally sweet treat that deliver a lot of nutrition all year round. Simply prepared—mashed, baked, folded into pancakes, or made into guilt-free baked fries—sweet potatoes are a nourishing addition to any meal. That orange flesh is a give away that these root vegetables are bursting with carotenoids. Carotenoids are a type of antioxidant—a naturally occurring chemical that prevents cells from being damaged. There are over 600 carotenoids, all packed with disease fighting properties. New research shows carotenoids may also help ward off Alzheimer's and the alpha- and beta-carotene (two types of carotenoids) in sweet potatoes may reduce the risk of breast cancer. They also promote eye health. As though that weren't enough, they're also a great source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber, with smaller amounts of vitamin B6, manganese, copper, and iron.

Sweet potato flesh and skins can come in different colors—white, yellow, orange, red, and purple—which each have different phytochemicals. The rarer purple variety has anthocyanins, a type of flavanoid, also an antioxidant, which may inhibit certain types of cancers.

You may have heard there's a difference between sweet potatoes and yams. This is true. The difference is sweet potatoes are a root vegetable, whereas yams are tubers—a thickened part of the stem. Sweet potatoes are what we buy in the stores.

How Often Should I Eat Them?

The USDA recommends that most adults eat two cups of orange fruits and vegetables each week. Sweet potatoes fit the bill—as do carrots, papaya, mangos, cantaloupe, and butternut squash.

What are some new ways to prepare them?

You can substitute sweet potatoes wherever you would use white ones—baked, mashed, turned into home fries (go easy on the oil!)—or try a new recipe:

- [Baked sweet potato fries](#)
- [Sweet potato pancakes](#)
- [Sweet Potato & Leek Cakes](#)
- [Curried Coconut Mashed Sweet Potatoes](#)

For a quick, satisfying dish, top a baked sweet potato with some heated black beans, salsa, and a spoonful of low-fat plain yogurt.

How to Choose Them

Sweet potatoes should be firm and free of bruises or soft spots. Store them in a cool dry place with adequate air flow.

1 medium potato (5" long and 2" wide—about the size of a computer mouse) has 103 calories, 4 grams fiber, 2 g protein, 438% of your DV of vitamin A and 37% of vitamin C.

Forget candied yams. Try a sweet potato today and let its natural sweetness surprise you.

Learn more about our favorite superfoods, like [buckwheat](#), [cranberries](#), and [walnuts](#)!