

March Food Focus:

Idaho Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes & Frozen Potatoes

a. Food Fact

Good 'ole Idaho potatoes are: fat free, cholesterol free, high in vitamin C, and high in potassium, and a good source of vitamin B6 and dietary fiber. Potatoes only become unhealthy when we fry them or prepare them with high calorie and high fat food items like butter, sour cream, cheese or eat them in too high a portion. People with diabetes often think they need to avoid potatoes. But this is just not true. People with diabetes must control the portion size of potatoes, just like any other food source with carbohydrates. To see how the potato compares to other foods with potassium and vitamin C, check out this website: <http://www.idahopotato.com/nutrition.php>



Sweet potatoes are rich in beta carotene (a form of vitamin A). The body converts the beta carotene in one serving of sweet potatoes to more than twice the daily requirement of Vitamin A. Beta carotene is a powerful cancer fighter that also drastically reduces blood cholesterol levels. In plants, beta carotene serves to protect leaves and stems from the ravages of sunlight and other environmental threats. In humans, these same compounds help block cancer formation, and also protect against arthritis and other degenerative diseases. In addition, sweet potatoes provide nearly as much vitamin E as do fatty nuts and seeds, and provide a nice dose of vitamin C and iron.



b. Food Product and/or Shopping Idea

Sweet Potatoes: There are basically two types of sweet potatoes grown in the United States: The orange-fleshed variety (often mistakenly called yams) and the Jersey Sweet, which has a pale yellow or whitish flesh. Both are delicious, however, the orange-fleshed variety is far more nutritious because it's packed with much more beta carotene. So, when shopping, look for the brightest color orange sweet potatoes you can find.



Idaho Potatoes: Look for potatoes that are clean, smooth, firm-textured and that do not have any cuts, bruises or discoloration. Avoid potatoes that are soft or have excessive cuts, cracks, bruises, discoloration or decay. If you see green spots, pare these off before cooking since this can cause them to taste bitter.



Frozen Potatoes: These can often be “time-savers.” But be sure to purchase those that are not breaded and without fat. If you are not careful, you will find that many frozen products contain unhealthy fats (more information later about unhealthy fats) and unnecessary added fat. **Ore Ida®** makes frozen potato wedges without added fat, but you will need to search for these, as they are not available in all supermarkets, and most of their other products DO contain fat. **Ore Ida® Hash Browns** and **Ore Ida® Potatoes O’Brien** contain 0 fat, however. If you read the words “crispy” or “extra crispy” as a description of the product (such as those pictured below), let that be a warning to you that the product most likely has extra fat added.

