

# POTATO FACT SHEET

## About Potatoes

- There are four basic market varieties: the russet (generally grown in Idaho), round white, long white, and round red.
- A new potato is not a variety but indicates that the potato was dug before it matured; therefore, they are small in size.
- Russets are best for baking because they have a mealy texture and tend to fall apart when boiled.
- Round and long whites are considered to be all-purpose potatoes (mashing, baking, boiling, and frying)
- Round, red potatoes are waxy, so they are excellent choices for boiling (mashed potatoes, potato salad).

## How to Select Potatoes

- Select loose potatoes that are well formed, firm, and have fairly smooth skin.
- Avoid green potatoes, they have been exposed to light and have a bitter taste.
- New potatoes and red varieties are best for boiling, oven browning, frying and potato salad.
- Russets are best for baking.
- All-purpose potatoes can be used for both baking and boiling.

## How to Store Potatoes

- Do not wash before storing.
- Do not store in the refrigerator. Temperatures below 45°F will cause the potato starch to turn to sugar and the potato to darken during cooking.
- Carefully chosen potatoes will keep for several weeks in a cool, dark, humid place, where the temperature is about 50 to 75 degrees.
- May be safely stored in a dry, dark, place for three months at 45-50 degrees Fahrenheit.

## How to Prepare Potatoes

- Bake, boil, or steam in their skins to conserve the nutrients.
- If the potatoes must be peeled, use a vegetable peeler and remove as little of the skin as possible.
- You can use the water the potatoes cooked in to add to soups or gravies, because it contains valuable nutrients.
- Do not allow potatoes to soak in cold water for any length of time. Water soluble nutrients will dissolve into the water.

## Baking Potatoes

- Bake potatoes in the skin. The skin is a good source of nutrients and prevents the potato from drying out during baking time.
- Scrub potatoes under cold running water to remove dirt and bacteria.
- Pierce potatoes in several places with fork to speed the baking time.
- For crispy skins, rub potatoes lightly with oil and place directly on baking rack in 400 degree oven; bake for one hour.
- For softer skins, wrap potatoes in aluminum foil, place directly on baking rack and bake for one hour. ***Potato connoisseurs would never bake potatoes in foil.*** You can wrap the baked potatoes in foil to hold until serving time.
- The potatoes are done when you can gently squeeze the sides and a fork easily slips in and out.
- When the potato tests done, and you are ready to eat it, cut an X or a zigzag pattern in the top of the potato with a fork; press the ends of the potato toward the center. This causes the potato to “blossom”.