

Did You Know..... Fun Facts About Potatoes!

1. Potato is the world's most widely grown tuber crop and the fourth largest food crop in terms of fresh produce after rice, wheat, and corn.
2. Peru's Inca Indians were the first to cultivate potatoes in about 200 B.C.
3. Genetic testing of the wide variety of cultivars and wild species suggest that the potato has a single origin in the area of southern Peru, from a species in the *Solanum brevicaulis* complex.
4. Today, over 99% of all cultivated potatoes worldwide are descendants of a subspecies indigenous to south-central Chile.
5. Based on historical records, local agriculturalists, and DNA analyses, the most widely cultivated variety worldwide, *Solanum tuberosum tuberosum*, is believed to be indigenous to Chiloé Archipelago where it was cultivated by the indigenous people.
6. The potato was introduced to Europe in 1536, and subsequently by European mariners to territories and ports throughout the world. Thousands of varieties persist in the Andes, where over 100 varieties might be found in a single valley, and a dozen or more might be maintained by a single agricultural household.



7. The potato became an important staple crop in northern Europe as the climate changed due to the Little Ice Age, when traditional crops in this region did not produce as reliably as before. At times when and where most other crops would fail, potatoes could still typically be relied upon to contribute adequately to food supplies during the colder years.
8. The first potatoes arrived in North America in 1621 when Captain Nathaniel Butler, then governor of Bermuda, sent two large cedar chests containing potatoes and other vegetables to Francis Wyatt, governor of Virginia at Jamestown. The first permanent North American potato patches were established in New England around 1719, most likely near Londonderry (now Derry), New Hampshire, by Scotch-Irish immigrants.
9. The English word potato comes from Spanish patata (the name used in Spain).
10. Another common name is "ground apple": pomme de terre in French, aardappel in Dutch, jarðepli in Icelandic (or kartafla,), תפוח אדמה in Hebrew (often written just as תפוח), and Erdapfel in Austrian German. An analogous name is Finnish as peruna, which comes from the old Swedish term jordpäron "earth pear". In 16th century French, pomme meant "fruit", thus pomme de terre meant "ground fruit" and was probably literally loan translated to other languages when potatoes were introduced. In Polish potato is called just ziemniaki or in some regions "kartofle", and in Slovak zemiak, from the word for "ground". In Persian it is called seeb-i zameen (سیبزمینی) which also translates into 'ground apple'.

11. In Hindi, Nepali, and several other Indian languages the potato is called alu or aloo, while in Marathi and Gujarati, the potato is called bataka or batata.
12. the United Nations officially declared the year 2008 as the International Year of the Potato in order to “increase awareness of the importance of the potato as a food in developing nations” and calling the vegetable a “hidden treasure”.
13. On any given day about half of all Americans eat potatoes in some form. The average American eats about 124 pounds of them per year.
14. Potatoes contain vitamins and minerals that have been identified as vital to human nutrition. The notion that “all of the potato’s nutrients” are found in the skin is an urban legend. While the skin does contain approximately half of the total dietary fiber, more than 50% of the nutrients are found within the potato itself.
15. A medium-size potato (6.5 ounces raw, about 5 ounces after baking), with its skin, has just 130 to 140 calories, virtually no fat, and 4 grams of fiber. It is one of the best sources of potassium, beating bananas handily. It’s also a good source of vitamin C.



16. About 100 potato varieties are commonly grown. They vary in shape, color, flavor, starch/sugar/moisture content, and texture. Some, like the popular russets (also called Idaho), are better for baking or mashing, others are better for roasting, boiling, or even steaming. “New” potatoes are freshly harvested and have very thin skin. Some potatoes have gold, red, purple, or blue skin, or gold, red, blue, orange, or purple flesh.
17. A potato is a living organism. If held at 40 degrees in a humid environment, the potato can store in a dormant state for up to 12 months.
18. The Irish referred to potatoes as “spuds,” the name that came from a type of spade called a “spudder” used for digging potatoes.
19. The word “pothole” which we use to describe a hole in the road came from the Irish. They boiled their daily meal of potatoes in a pot. When the potatoes were finished cooking, the pot was lifted off the fire and set on the ground to cool. In the process of mashing the potatoes, the pot would be pushed into the ground. In time, a deep hole would develop, or a pothole!
20. Do we eat the roots of potatoes? Potatoes are occasionally referred to as a root crop because we eat a part of the plant that grows underground. However, the part of the potato that is eaten is not a root, it is actually a specialized stem called a tuber.
21. Potatoes come to Idaho. Idaho’s first potato grower was not a farmer at all, but a Presbyterian missionary, Henry Harmon Spalding. His plan was to demonstrate to the Nez Perce that they could provide food for themselves through agriculture rather than hunting and gathering. Text Excerpted from Aristocrat in Burlap: A History of the Potato in Idaho by James W. Davis. Courtesy of the Idaho Potato Commission.
22. Potatoes were considered an aphrodisiac during Shakespeare’s time. In his play, The Merry Wives of Windsor, William Shakespeare had one of his characters proclaim, “Let the sky rain potatoes!”

23. One pound of dry Idahoan® Mashed Potatoes is equivalent to approximately 6 pounds of raw “fresh” potatoes. One pound of dry Idahoan® Mashed Potatoes will make just over 6 pounds of prepared mashed potatoes.
24. Can Idahoan ® mashed potatoes be in recipes calling for “Fresh” potatoes? Yes. One cup of prepared Idahoan ® Mashed Potatoes = one medium fresh potato.
25. The state of Idaho is world famous for growing the best potatoes, and Idahoan ® Mashed Potatoes are made with 100% real Idaho® potatoes.
26. Potatoes are a great source of complex carbohydrates for energy and potassium.
27. Potatoes (especially dehydrated) are excellent thickeners for sauces and soups.

28. Van Gogh's painting "The Potato Eaters" represents a family eating potatoes. Van Gogh said he wanted to depict peasants as they really were. "I wanted to convey the idea that the people eating potatoes by the light of an oil lamp used the same hands with which they take food from the plate to work the land, that they have toiled with their hands—that they have earned their food by honest means."



29. The practice of drying and grinding starchy root vegetables for preservation and portability is widely attested around the world, and likely dates back to before the advent of agriculture. Potatoes in particular have been freeze-dried since at least the time of the Inca empire, in the form of chuño. The existence of chuño dates back to before the time of the Inca Empire, based on findings of that have been made of the product at various archeological sites. Specifically they have been found at Tiwanaku, site of a culture which developed in the Collao Plateau, a geographic zone which includes territories of Peru and Bolivia. Chuño [ˈtʃuˈnjo] is a freeze-dried potato product traditionally made by Quechua and Aymara communities of Peru and Bolivia, and is known in various countries of South America, including Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. It is a five-day process, obtained by exposing a frost-resistant variety of potatoes to the very low night temperatures of the Andean Altiplano, freezing them, and subsequently exposing them to the intense sunlight of the day (this being the traditional process). The word comes from Quechua ch'uñu, meaning frozen potato (wrinkled in the dialects of the Junín Region).
30. U.S. Patent 1025373, titled "Dehydrate Potatoes and Process of Preparing the Same", and describing a product that was to be reconstituted in hot water, was applied for in 1905 and granted in 1912.
31. Flake-form instant mashed potatoes date back at least to 1954, when two United States Department of Agriculture researchers were issued a patent for "Drum drying of cooked mashed potatoes" (U.S. Patent 2759832), which describes the end product specifically being "as a thin sheet or flake".
32. In 1962, Canadian scientist Edward A. Asselbergs was issued U.S. Patent 3260607, entitled "Preparation of dehydrated cooked mashed potato", for a particular industrial method of producing the product.