



Sweet Potato

The Health Benefits of Sweet Potato

This root vegetable ranges from yellow, orange to purple on the inside, making it rich in antioxidants. Some call them yams but they are all just different varieties of sweet potatoes. True yams are not found in the US. Sweet potatoes can be eaten raw or cooked.

One cup raw or 1/2 cup cooked sweet potato provides:

- 90 Calories, 2 gm protein, 3 gm fiber, 0 gm fat, no cholesterol

Nutrients in sweet potato

- High in beta carotene, vitamins C & E, antioxidants that support eye and brain health, protect against colds and free radicals
- Contain both slow-digested and resistant starches which help control blood sugar levels and keep you feeling full & fueled
- High in dietary fiber, including soluble fiber which lowers blood sugar & cholesterol; also contains insoluble fiber for colon health
- Good source of minerals like potassium & calcium
- Swap out for white potatoes in soups, as mashed or in side dishes

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www.advancedhealth.com/healthy-bytes-initiative

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Think you know Sweet Potatoes?



SWEET POTATO vs YAM



Both of these pictured above are sweet potatoes. You may be surprised to learn that neither is a yam.

In most grocery stores, you can find yellow and orange sweet potatoes, but often the orange sweet potatoes are labeled “yams.” Americans have been calling the orange varieties yams since Colonial times, and the USDA perpetuates this misnomer. The truth is that most US grocery stores do not sell yams at all.

There are distinct differences:

Sweet Potatoes	“True” Yams
Orange and yellow skin with yellow, orange or purple flesh	Brown skin with white flesh
Thin, soft, edible skin	Thick, scaly skin
Sweet and creamy, especially the orange variety	Bland and starchy Require generous spicing
Can be consumed raw or cooked	<i>Contain a toxin which must be neutralized with cooking</i>

NUTRITIOUS & DELICIOUS

- ♦ Ranked as one of the top 10 healthiest foods on the planet by the Mayo Clinic
- ♦ High in beta-carotene, an antioxidant which protects eyes, skin and hair
- ♦ High in B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, B6 and pantothenic acid), which help keep your blood vessels young
- ♦ Good source of potassium which regulates fluid balance and lowers blood pressure
- ♦ Fewer calories yet sweeter than white potatoes, with a lower glycemic index, steadying blood sugars. High manganese helps the body metabolize carbohydrates
- ♦ Good source of dietary fiber for healthy digestion
- ♦ Purple varieties may have anti-cancer effects



True yams are typically found in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

“Yam” comes from the African word “nyami” which means “to eat.”

Yams can grow to be 6 feet long or larger and upwards of 100 pounds.

Sweet potatoes do not grow this large.



WHITE OR SWEET POTATO?

- ♦ White potatoes are starchy, with a higher glycemic index, raising blood sugars. Sweet potatoes are a better choice for diabetics and pre-diabetics.
- ♦ White potatoes do not contain beta-carotene or calcium like orange sweet potatoes. Both do contain good amounts of vitamin C & potassium.
- ♦ Since sweet potatoes appeal to children, they make a great raw snack in lunch boxes, or baked strips as finger food.

YELLOW, ORANGE or PURPLE?

- ♦ The orange varieties contain the highest beta-carotene, the plant equivalent of vitamin A. Just 3-4 ounces of cooked orange sweet potato provides 90-400% of our vitamin A requirement (depending on your age/body size).
- ♦ Purple varieties contain anthocyanins, powerful antioxidants with anti-inflammatory properties.

BUYING

- ♦ Choose sweet potatoes that are firm, with no cracks, bruises or soft spots.
- ♦ Buying organic will allow you the option of eating the skins. If you do not buy organic, peel before cooking or eating.

STORING

- ♦ Store at cool temps above 60°. Refrigerator temps (below 40°) may decrease flavors.
- ♦ Store them loose, or in a paper bag. Punch a few ventilation holes in the bag (no plastic).
- ♦ Stored properly, they should last at least 10 days



EATING

- ♦ A small amount of fat helps the body absorb beta-carotene. Add nuts and/or seeds to cooked sweet potato for added nutrition benefit.
- ♦ Puree cooked sweet potatoes with bananas and cinnamon. Top with chopped walnuts and enjoy hot or cold as breakfast or dessert.

COOKING



- ♦ Steaming retains the most nutrients. Cut in cubes and steam 7 minutes. Add cinnamon or nutmeg for a flavor boost. Can also be steamed in the microwave.
- ♦ Roasting brings out the sweetness and flavor of sweet potatoes.
- ♦ Cube and boil, then mash. Don't add sweetener or marshmallows! Instead, sprinkle with pecans, walnuts or pumpkin seeds for a holiday treat.
- ♦ Sweet potato fries? Not fried, baked. Bake at 350° until crispy (15-20 min). Sprinkle with cumin or nutmeg and just a pinch of salt.

REFERENCES

Allrecipes.com	Nutritionfacts.org
Health.clevelandclinic.org	Wikipedia.com
Nal.usda.gov	Whatscooking.fns.usda.gov
Nutritiondata.self.com	Whfoods.org

Bottom line:

Sweet potatoes are packed with nutrients, fiber and sweetness in a low-calorie, no-fat package. Choose darker orange or purple varieties for greatest benefit.