

KNOW YOUR MINNESOTA POTATOES



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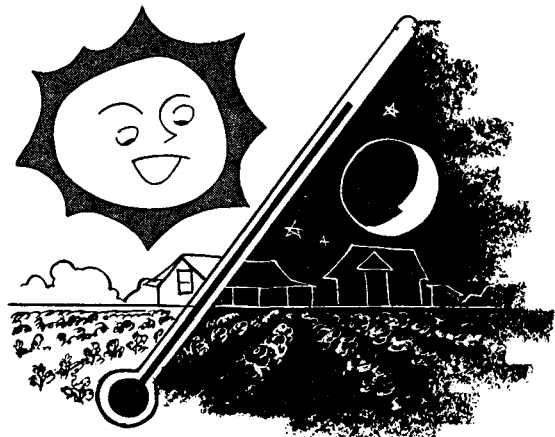
POTATOES ARE HIGH IN VITAMINS AND LOW IN CALORIES

Minnesota Is a Big Potato Producer

Minnesota—eighth largest potato producer among the states—is faced with a dropping potato production. During the last decade production decreased about 10¼ million bushels, reaching a low of 12.4 million bushels in 1953. Along with this, the acreage has decreased 66 per cent—from 234,000 acres in 1943 to 78,000 acres in 1953.

But the picture is brightened by the fact that potato growers are using better varieties, more fertilizer, better pest control, and mechanical harvesting and handling. These are the factors that have almost doubled the yield per acre in the last 10 years. The average in 1953 was 160 bushels per acre.

The long summer days of bright intense sunlight and the cool fall nights make Minnesota's climate suitable for production of high-quality potatoes.



Warm days and cool nights produce good potatoes.

Locally grown new potatoes reach market in late July, but it is not uncommon to find early home-grown potatoes by July 15. The late crop arrives at market during late September and October.

The early crop of new potatoes is usually immature and the skins are very thin. These potatoes are inclined to be waxy when cooked, but this waxiness is desirable in some methods of cooking.

BUYERS HAVE DEFINITE HABITS

But They Don't Know About Grades

Do you know what potato grades mean? If you are like most of the homemakers in this country, you don't.

A nation-wide survey of homemakers made by the United States Department of Agriculture showed that homemakers didn't know the meaning of grades. More than half of those interviewed said they had heard of potato grades, but most of those people had only a general impression of what the grades mean.

Handlers and retailers may grade potatoes if they wish—or if their customers request it. Table 1 shows the various United States consumer grades.

Table 1. United States Consumer Grades

	Size requirements—round or intermediate shapes		Size requirements—long shape		Tolerance for size	
	Min. diam.	Max. diam.	Min. diam. or wt.	Max. wt.	Under-size	Over-size
	in.	in.	oz.	%	%	
U. S. Grades						
A&B Small	1½	2¼	1½ in.	4	3	15
U. S. Grades						
A&B Medium	2¼	3	4 oz.	10	5	15
U. S. Grades						
A&B Medium to Large	2¼	4	4 oz.	16	5	15
U. S. Grades						
A&B Large	3	4	10 oz.	16	5	15

Off-grade potatoes. Potatoes which fail to meet the requirements of any of these grades are called off-grade.

People Place Quality First

"Quality counts most when I buy potatoes," the homemakers told the poll-takers. Size was second in importance and price third. Households with small incomes are more concerned about price than those with large incomes. As incomes increase, people are more interested in quality and size and are less interested in price.

Many of the interviewed consumers reported they buy less potatoes when prices shift upward—even when the potatoes are of good quality. Even more said that when prices go down, they buy more. But on the other hand, twice as many people said they buy less when potatoes are of poor quality, even when price is low.

People Like to Buy Potatoes Out of a Bin

The survey mentioned above showed that three-fifths of the nation's homemakers buy their potatoes out of a bin and usually in lots of 5 pounds or less at a time. The homemakers prefer this method of buying because they can see what they are getting and can make small units of purchase.



Food shoppers like to make their own selection.

About one-sixth of the homemakers said packaged potatoes were more convenient—perhaps because of better quality. Many of the women preferred open-mesh bags and more than half preferred them variety-labeled.

HANDLING AND SHIPPING ARE EXPENSIVE

Potatoes require no processing other than brushing or washing or waxing before reaching the consumer, but handling and shipping are quite expensive. Spoilage sometimes widens the gap in price between producer and consumer. Distribution (including marketing, storage, handling, and the retailer's and broker's margins) accounted for 61 per cent of the consumer's potato expenditure in 1953; the farmer's share was 39 per cent.

Table 2. Potatoes on the Market in Minnesota

Variety	Period on market	Color	Shape	Eyes	Flesh	Use
Red Warba	Early	Red	Blocky	Deep	Dry	Boil with jackets, mash, bake
Waseca	Early	Red	Oblong to round—medium thick	Shallow	Moist	Boil with jackets, mash, fry
Irish Cobbler	Early	White	Round with blunt ends	Medium to deep	Dry	Boil with jackets, mash, bake
Bliss Triumph	Early	Red	Round, thick	Medium deep	Moist	Boil, fry
White Rose*	Early	White	Long, oval, flattened	Medium deep	Moist	Boil, fry
Red Pontiac	Late	Red	Oblong to round	Medium deep	Moist	Boil, fry
Chippewa	Late	White	Oval, flattened	Shallow	Moist	Boil, fry
Sebago	Late	White	Oval to round, medium thick	Shallow	Moist	Boil, fry
Kennebec	Late	White	Oval to oblong, medium thick	Shallow	Dry	Boil, mash, bake
Cherokee	Late	White	Round, medium thick	Medium shallow	Dry	Boil, mash, bake
Russet Burbank	Late	Russet	Long, cylindrical, slightly flattened	Shallow	Dry	Mash, bake

* Not locally grown in Minnesota.

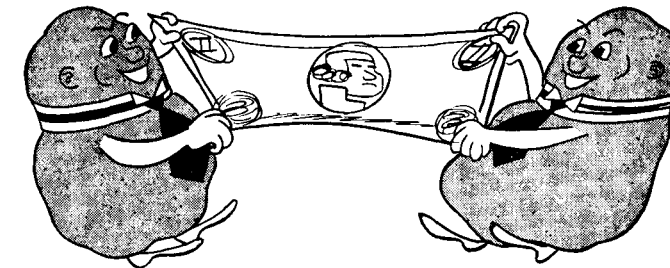
POTATOES ARE FULL OF FOOD VALUE

But People Don't Know It

The potato is a valuable food, relatively low in calories. Many of the people interviewed in the survey indicated they eat potatoes because they are accustomed to do so. Most of the homemakers said they pay little attention to the nutritive qualities of potatoes.

Potatoes are low in calories and are a good source of carbohydrates, phosphorus, iron, thiamine, niacin, and vitamin C.

Potatoes continue to be one of the better buys. Penny for penny, they have more energy-giving food value than any other vegetable.



Potatoes are budget dollar stretchers.

KNOW THE POTATOES YOU BUY

Too few consumers know the results of cooking the various varieties of potatoes. Table 2 gives the varieties grown in Minnesota, the time they are on the market, their characteristics, and their use.

POTATOES ARE EASY ON YOUR FOOD BUDGET

POTATOES SHOULD BE SELECTED FOR THEIR USE

In selecting potatoes, size is one of the important points. Different sizes of potatoes may be suitable for different uses. For example, medium or small potatoes can be thrifty buys for general use and are preferred for salad, creaming, and browning whole. But for baked, mashed, or French fried potatoes, a large, uniform potato is desirable.

Whichever size you buy, look for sound, smooth potatoes with shallow eyes and a clean, smooth, firm skin. Also, choose all one variety so that the potatoes will cook alike.

Select potatoes which become mealy instead of soggy after cooking. Generally speaking, potatoes that are dry and heavy are mealier than moist, light potatoes. Avoid green potatoes as they may have a bitter taste.

Most consumers have a color or variety preference. However, it is wise to become familiar with all potatoes on the market and select the variety to suit the method of cooking regardless of color.

Potatoes Come to Market Washed and Waxed

Most of the potatoes arriving at market are washed. Many of the red varieties are also given a coat of wax containing a small amount of U. S. certified red color to make them bright and uniform. Waxing potatoes does not improve their keeping quality.

PROCESSED POTATOES ARE TIME-SAVERS

Processed potatoes—canned, frozen, chip, and dehydrated—are for the busy consumer who would not use potatoes unless they were ready to eat or easily pre-



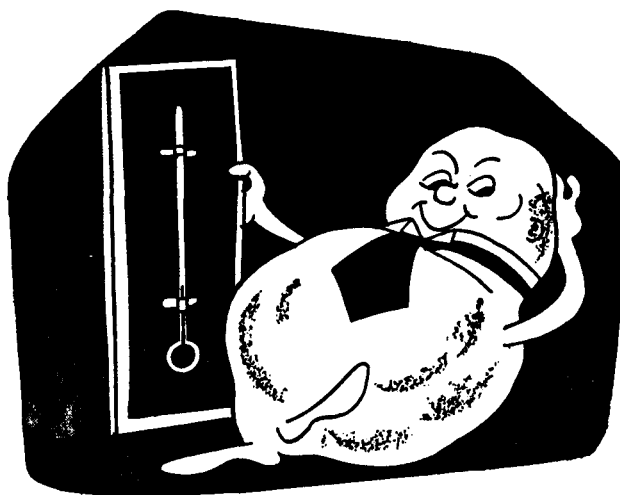
Potatoes come to the market in many forms.

pared. The consumption of processed potatoes is increasing every day. For example, the use of frozen French fries is increasing at the rate of 25 percent per year and this vegetable is now the second most popular frozen one on the market (peas are first).

The container and services add to the cost of processed potatoes, but for convenience many consumers are willing to pay this cost.

Table 3. Cost Comparisons on Processed Potatoes in February 1956

Style	Unit	Number of Cost per	
		Cost	servings serving
		cents	cents
Canned whole—cooked	8 oz.	2/19	4 4.8
Canned whole—cooked	No. 303 can	15 6-8	1.9-2.5
Canned slices—cooked	No. 303 can	2/29	6-8 3.6-4.8
Canned shoestring	4 oz.	22 4	5.5
Chips	16 oz.	49 16	3.1
Chips	4 oz.	25 4	6.3
Dehydrated	7 oz.	33 8	4.1
Frozen French fries	9 oz.	19 3-4	4.8-6.3
Frozen diced (hash browned)	12 oz.	19 3-4	4.8-6.3



Keep potatoes cool in storage.

POTATOES SHOULD BE STORED IN A COOL PLACE

Potatoes keep best in a dark room where a temperature between 36° and 40° and a relative humidity of 85 percent can be maintained. When stored below 36° the potatoes usually become sweet, but by storing them

at ordinary room temperatures for a few days the natural flavor will be restored. We also find that most basements often are warmer than 40° and potatoes usually sprout and shrink at these temperatures. However, chemicals can be obtained to prevent sprouting of potatoes stored in the home.

POTATOES ARE A PARTY FOOD, TOO

POTATO FRITTERS

2 cups hot riced potatoes
2 tablespoons cream
1 teaspoon salt
Few gratings nutmeg

Few grains cayenne
3 eggs, beaten
2 egg yolks, beaten
½ cup flour

Add cream and seasonings to potatoes, then add eggs well beaten. Add flour, and when well mixed drop by spoonfuls in deep fat (375°-390° F.). Fry until delicately browned, and drain on brown paper.

FRIED POTATO CURLS

Wash and pare potatoes and cut in one-half inch slices. Cut each slice in a continuous round so as to make curls. Dry on a towel, and fry in deep fat (395° F.). Drain on brown paper, and sprinkle with salt.

FRENCH FRIED POTATO NESTS

Wash, pare, and cut potatoes in thin strips. Soak in cold water 15 minutes, drain, and dry between towels. Using a fine wire strainer of 4-inch diameter and having a wire handle, line it with potatoes. Then place a similar strainer with a 2½-inch diameter in larger strainer, thus holding potatoes in nest shapes. Fry in deep fat, taking care that the fat does not reach too high a temperature at first. Keep the small strainer in place with a long-handled spoon during frying. Carefully remove nests from strainers. Drain on brown paper. Fill with any creamed mixture.

OLD-FASHIONED HOT POTATO SALAD

2 slices bacon
¼ cup chopped onion
1 tablespoon chopped green pepper

3 cups hot diced cooked potatoes
Salt to taste
2 hard-cooked eggs

Fry the bacon until crisp, and remove from the pan. Fry onion and green pepper a few minutes in the bacon fat and add to potatoes, hard-cooked eggs, and crumbled bacon.

Moisten with the following dressing:

1 tablespoon vinegar
¼ cup water
1 tablespoon sugar

¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon flour

Cook together a few minutes and add to 1 cup cooked salad dressing. Pour over potatoes and mix lightly.

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