

Potatoes

The potato is a root vegetable native to the Americas. Wild potatoes originated in Peru, but today, they can be found from Chile to the United States. Potatoes were first domesticated about 10,000 years ago in the area which today is southern Peru and north-western Bolivia. The English word "potato" comes from the Spanish word "*patata*".

Potatoes were introduced to Europe from the Americas in the second half of the 16th century by the Spanish. Today, the potato is a basic, important food in many parts of the world. It is the world's fifth-largest food crop after sugar, corn, rice and wheat.

Following a millennia of selective breeding, there are now over 4,000 different types of potatoes. Over 99% of cultivated potatoes around the world today are descended from varieties originating in Chile and Peru.



The importance of the potato as a food source and culinary ingredient varies by region. It is an essential crop in Europe, especially Northern and Eastern Europe, where production is high. However, China and India are the leading producers of potatoes in the world. Potatoes are consumed in the UK much more than rice, because they are cheaper, since rice is imported. In England, rice is usually only eaten in restaurants, with Chinese food, Indian food, etc.

The vegetative and fruiting parts of the potato contain the toxin "solanine" which is dangerous for human consumption. If green sections of the plant (sprouts and skins) are exposed to light, the potato can accumulate a high concentration of toxin. Potatoes should be stored in cool, dark areas. Sprouts should be removed before cooking.

Potatoes in Brazil

Cultivation of potatoes in Brazil began around 1890, when European immigrants arrived in southern Brazil. Today, in the state of São Paulo, potatoes are grown and harvested almost every month of the year. The potato, known as "batata inglesa", is still a minor crop for Brazilian agriculture, nevertheless, Brazil is the second biggest potato producer in Latin America. Over the past 15 years, the country's potato output has grown by five percent a year, and average yields have increased from 14 tonnes to 24 tonnes per hectare. The annual consumption of potatoes is around 14 kg per person, including processed potato snacks. The UK, as a comparison, consumes around 100kg of potatoes per person per year.

Potatoes vs Rice

One medium baked potato with skin (A) is similar to a cup of cooked white rice (B). Here is a comparison (according to the United States Department of Agriculture):

	A	B
Calories:	161	205
Protein:	4.3g	4.3g
Fat:	0.2g	0.4g
Carbohydrates:	36.6g	44.5g
Fiber:	3.8g	0.6g

Overall, potatoes are healthier than rice because they are lower in calories and fat and higher in fiber.

Methods of Preparing Potatoes



Boiled potatoes



Baked potato



Fried potatoes
UK: chips / USA: french fries



Gnocchi



Loaded potato skins



Mashed potato



Potato gratin



Potato muffins



Potato waffles



Roasted potatoes



Steamed potatoes



Steamed potatoes (with skins)

Suggested recipe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vjd7962D5ME>