



# Fresh Friday

December 2011

## Sweet Potatoes



### Fresh Facts

Sweet potatoes are a kind of root vegetable, which means they grow underground. Other types of root vegetables include carrots, radishes, parsnips and beets.

Sweet potatoes can have bright orange or pale yellow flesh. The pale ones are usually less sweet and more starchy. In American supermarkets, the sweet, moist, bright orange-fleshed ones are often called “yams,” but they are actually sweet potatoes. True yams are a similar, but botanically unrelated vegetable native to Africa and Asia.

Nutrient-dense sweet potatoes are an excellent source of vitamins A and C, and they provide vitamin B6, iron, potassium, fiber and beta-carotene.

Sweet potatoes should be sliced with a stainless steel knife. A carbon blade will cause the flesh to brown.

### Did you know?

Another celebrated holiday food, the chestnut, is technically a tree nut, but it has a starchy, potato-like texture. Just like the famous song lyrics say, chestnuts are delicious roasted on an open fire or in the oven, and can also be braised, glazed or boiled. Add chestnuts to stuffings, soups, breads and desserts.

### Try this at home:

#### Grow a sweet potato houseplant!

Just add water and a sweet potato will first sprout roots, then grow leaves and eventually produce vines.

#### What you'll need:

- sweet potato
- glass jar
- toothpicks
- water

**Step 1:** Stick 3-4 toothpicks sideways into a sweet potato so they stick out from the potato like spokes on a wheel.

**Step 2:** Lower the sweet potato into the glass jar. The toothpicks will hold the potato up a few inches away from the bottom of the jar.

**Step 3:** Add enough water to the jar so the bottom of the sweet potato sits in the water.

**Step 4:** Place the jar on a windowsill or other sunny spot indoors.

**Step 5:** Check the jar daily. Add water as needed to keep the water level the same

# Recipes

## **Sweet Potato Chestnut Soup**

2 lb. sweet potatoes, peeled and grated  
2 tbsp. olive oil  
2 red onions, coarsely chopped  
4 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced  
1 tsp. dried cumin  
2 tsp. dried cinnamon  
1 lb. chestnuts, cooked and peeled  
4 c. vegetable or chicken stock  
salt and pepper to taste  
parsley for garnish (optional)

Peel and grate the sweet potatoes by hand or with a food processor. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan and sauté the sweet potatoes, red onions, cinnamon, cumin and garlic for about 5 minutes. Add stock, bring to a boil and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add the cooked chestnuts and simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Puree until smooth using an immersion blender or transfer to an upright blender in small batches. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with chopped parsley. Serve hot.

## **Oven-Baked Sweet Potato Fries**

3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into wedges  
1 tbsp. vegetable oil  
1 tsp. ground cumin  
¼ tsp. paprika  
½ tsp. salt (or more to taste)  
dash cayenne pepper (optional)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl, toss together all ingredients until potatoes are evenly coated with oil and spices. Place potatoes on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake for about 30 minutes until potatoes are slightly browned and crisp on the outside and tender on the inside.

## **Easy Mashed Sweet Potatoes**

4 whole sweet potatoes  
butter (optional)  
salt and pepper (optional)  
brown sugar (optional)

Use a fork to pierce each sweet potato several times. Wrap each potato in a paper towel. Arrange the wrapped sweet potatoes in the microwave in a star pattern. Cook on high for 9-10 minutes. Perform a squeeze test and if potatoes still feel firm, cook one more minute and test again. Repeat this process until they feel very soft. (Total cooking time can vary widely depending on your microwave.) Cut each sweet potato in half lengthwise, and use a spoon to scrape out the soft flesh into a medium-size bowl. Mash with a fork, potato masher or hand mixer. Add butter, salt, pepper and/or brown sugar to taste.

## **Roasted Pears and Sweet Potatoes**

2 sweet potatoes, sliced 1½ inches thick  
3 tbsp. olive oil  
½ tsp. ground ginger  
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper  
2 Bartlett pears, cored, quartered and halved  
coarse salt to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Scrub sweet potatoes, quarter lengthwise, then slice diagonally 1½ inches thick. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss slices with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and all the spices, then season with coarse salt. Roast, tossing occasionally, until crisp-tender (about 20-25 minutes).

While sweet potatoes cook, core and quarter the pears, then halve them crosswise. Add them to the potatoes and toss entire mixture with an additional tablespoon of olive oil, then roast an additional 10 minutes or until potatoes are fork-tender.

Source: *Martha Stewart Living*