

How you prepare potatoes is the secret to their nutrition

Dear Dr. Meinig:

Recently you wrote about french fried potatoes and implied that they were a problem in a weight control program, but regular potatoes were not involved. I have been avoiding potatoes. How about an article on the subject: I kept the one on french fries to remind me of their many problems.

F.O.

Dear F.O.:

Because there is a mistaken opinion that potatoes are fattening, they have in recent years become much maligned by writers and the public.

Ounce for ounce, other than when prepared as french fries in deep-fat fry cookers, they have one-third fewer calories and more nutrients than dinnerrolls, white bread and other grain products often used in their place.

A 3¼ ounce potato, depending on what kind it is, only contains between 61 and 93 calories, while the same amount of cottage cheese, often chosen in place of potatoes as being less fattening, contains 106 calories. French fries absorb so much of the cooking oil they contain 274 calories.

I am appalled at the overweight people I observe in restaurants who leave most of their baked potato, but manage to gobble down two or three rolls or slices of bread. These contain 140 to 250 calories, compared to the 61 to 93 found in different kinds of potatoes, with the exception of the french fries. The amount of butter used on each is relatively the same. Another observation I have made of overweight peoples' restaurant eating habits is the frequency with which they leave most of their salad in order to have room for the 256 calorie piece of apple pie; when ala mode, add another 222 calories for a total of 478.

Actually, three-fourths of a potato is composed of water. The remaining one-fourth is 15 percent starch, one to two percent protein, two to three percent minerals and the balance fiber. Most of the protein is located in the layer just under the skin; it is lost or wasted by heavy peeling. This is the reason you find nutritionists advise it is better to eat the skin than the inside. Potatoes contain very little fat or sugar and



Dr. George

By George Meinig, DDS

are high in potassium, phosphorus and calcium.

When the Spanish explorers, sailing up the Pacific side of South America landed in the area of the Andes, the natives introduced them to a number of new foods. The sailors found a tuber the primitives were cultivating to be delicious and nourishing.

There isn't anything in the history books about who introduced potatoes to Europe. However, records indicate they were known in Spain about 1570 and in England before

1590. Early plantings in Europe were grown more as curiosity than as a food. Potatoes were introduced into the North American colonies from Bermuda in 1621.

The Spanish adventurers dreamed of discovering wealth in gold and silver. How strange it would be for them if they now could see how these insignificant tubers have proved a greater boon to the world than all the precious metals they found by their dangerous voyage explorations.

It wasn't too long before potatoes were grown widely over the world. They do better in colder zones, so cultivation in Europe and Russia became extensive, playing an important part in the history of these areas.

For instance, the Irish love of potatoes is well known, but few Americans realize they call them "bog apples."

If you missed my article about why eating french fries is "verboden" and would like a copy, send a long SASE to me in care of the OVN, P.O. Box 277, Ojai, CA 93024. Just say "French Fries."

Everyone has questions about nutrition. Send yours to Dr. George, C/O Ojai Valley News, Box 277, Ojai, CA 93024.

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