



## Harvest of the Month

# SWEET POTATOES

**T**his root vegetable has a skin that may vary from dark yellow to dark red with an orange flesh which, as its name suggests, has a natural, sweet flavor. Although sometimes called yams, true yams are starchy edible roots that are white in color with a tough skin. Yams are native to Africa and are not commercially grown in the United States.



### Did you know?



Sweet potatoes are in the morning glory family and likely date back to prehistoric times.



While sweet potatoes are grown mainly for their edible tubers in the United States, in many parts of Asia and Africa they are grown for their edible leaves.



Sweet potatoes grow under the soil and their leaves grow above the ground.

### Selection

Look for firm sweet potatoes with smooth skin that is free from cracks, bruises, and signs of decay.

### Storage

To preserve texture and flavor, avoid storing sweet potatoes in the refrigerator. Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dark place away from heat sources for up to two to three weeks. Cooked sweet potatoes can be stored in an airtight container in the freezer. Add a small amount of lemon juice to preserve color.

### Handling

Wash before using. Cut off any brown spots. Use a stainless-steel knife to cut sweet potatoes as a carbon blade may cause the flesh to darken.

### Nutrition

Sweet potatoes are a good source of Vitamin A, fiber, and potassium. Vitamin A is important in eye health and immune function. Potassium is a mineral that helps muscles contract and maintain normal blood pressure. Fiber is important in digestive function and can lower risk of diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.

### School Meal Connection

Sweet potatoes qualify as a red/orange vegetable.

### Harvest Season

According to the PA Preferred Seasonal Calendar, sweet potatoes are in season in Pennsylvania from August through November.

### Finding Sweet Potatoes

Child Nutrition Program operators may be able to find local sweet potatoes in a variety of ways. Check with your produce distributor to learn what they have available. You can search for products through the PA Preferred website or connect with local producers through produce auctions or farmer's markets. The Food Trust has also developed a Guide to Local Produce in Keystone Schools which identifies producers who are interested in selling to schools.



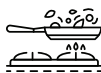
## Preparation



**Bake:** Prick several times with a fork and bake at 400 F for 40–50 minutes until tender.



**Boil:** Place whole sweet potatoes in boiling water and cook about 35–40 minutes or until tender.



**Saute:** Peel and cut into ¼–½ inch thick slices or 1–inch cubes. Place slice/cubes and 2T butter or oil in a large skillet and cook, stirring frequently, over medium–high heat until tender.



**Steam:** In a steamer, bring 1½ inches of water to a boil. Place whole, unpeeled sweet potatoes in steamer basket, cover and steam for 40–50 minutes or until tender. Peeling the sweet potatoes and cutting them into 1–inch cubes shortens the cooking time to 30 minutes.



**Grill:** Slice lengthwise into ¼–inch thick slices. Place on grill. Turn once. Remove when tender.



## Recipe

### Sweet Potato and Black Bean Salad (PrimeroEdge Recipe Code: SR109592)

42 servings (¼ cup)

¼ cup serving credits as:

- ⅓ cup red/orange vegetable
- ⅓ cup legume OR ½ oz meat/meat alternate

### Ingredients

2 lb 4 oz sweet potatoes  
1 ½ medium limes  
2 T vegetable oil  
2 tsp ground cumin  
2 tsp ground coriander  
1 tsp kosher salt  
½ bunch fresh cilantro  
2 T rice wine vinegar or white wine vinegar  
1 ½ tsp honey  
2 T olive oil  
1 qt + 1 ¼ cups black beans, canned,  
rinsed and drained

### Steps

1. Preheat convection oven to 400 degrees F or conventional oven to 425 degrees.
2. Peel sweet potatoes (if desired) and cut into ¼–inch dice.
3. Zest and juice limes.
4. Toss sweet potatoes, vegetable oil, 1 tsp cumin, 1 tsp coriander, and ½ tsp salt in a large bowl. Spread in a single layer on a sheet pan. Roast, stirring once, until fork tender and beginning to brown, 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool.
5. Remove tough stems from cilantro and discard. Pulse the cilantro in a food processor fitted with a steel blade until chopped, about 10 seconds. Add the lime zest and juice, vinegar, honey, the remaining 1 tsp cumin, 1 tsp coriander and ½ tsp salt and pulse for about 10 seconds more. Add olive oil and pulse until the dressing is mostly smooth.
6. Toss the cooled sweet potatoes, black beans and dressing in a large bowl. Serve chilled.

**Source:** New School Cuisine: Nutrition and Seasonal Recipes for School Cooks by School Cooks (Vermont Agency of Education, Vermont FEED)



Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website ([www.paharvestofthemonth.org](http://www.paharvestofthemonth.org)) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.

Developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Penn State University (Project PA).

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organization imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.