

Sweet Potatoes

Why are they so healthy?



Although sweet potatoes are often referred to as yams in the southern part of the United States and in Canada, the two are not related. It would actually be quite difficult to find a true yam within the United States unless shopping at a specialty grocery store featuring African or Asian cuisine. Sweet potatoes, however, are widely available. Sweet potatoes are also not related to regular potatoes. Sweet potatoes are in the morning glory family whereas potatoes are in the night shade family.

One baked sweet potato (3.5 ounce serving) provides over twice the daily requirements for vitamin A, yet it contains only 141 calories. This nutritious vegetable also provides 42% of the daily requirements of vitamin C, 6% of calcium, 10% of iron, and 8% of thiamine. It is low in sodium and is a good source of fiber and other important vitamins and minerals. A complex carbohydrate food source, sweet potatoes provide beta carotene which may be a factor in reducing the risk of certain cancers. With their high levels of vitamins A, C and beta carotene, sweet potatoes are known to be an anti-inflammatory that can reduce the severity of conditions such as asthma, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis. Sweet potatoes also contain unique proteins that have been observed to have significant antioxidant capacities.

Whether you call it a yam or a sweet potato, or if you eat it baked or grilled, enjoy this tasty vegetable knowing that it is good for you.

~ Courtesy of Aran Essig, UNC Dining Services Executive Chef ~

