

SWEET POTATO 101

HISTORY OF SWEET POTATOES

Sweet potatoes are as American as apple pie! Native Americans were growing sweet potatoes when Columbus came in 1492, and by the 16th century, sweet potatoes were being cultivated in the southern states, where they became a staple in the traditional cuisine. With their delicious sweetness and mild flavor, sweet potatoes take to a variety of ethnic seasonings, making them a go-to ingredient no matter what the season.

From Southern to Thai, Caribbean to BBQ, sweet potatoes are used in cuisines all over the world as a satisfying and versatile vegetable with a well-earned reputation for being nutritious.



HOW TO CHOOSE

There are hundreds of types of sweet potatoes ranging from white and mild to deep red and super sweet. Many are grown in small quantities and can be found at local farmers markets. Lucky for you, North Carolina sweet potatoes are available every month of the year. When selecting sweet potatoes, it is important that they are firm to the touch and show no signs of decay. For even cooking, choose sweet potatoes that are uniform in shape and size.

The following are three popular sweet potato varieties found in grocery stores nationwide. Depending on flavor and texture, certain sweet potato varieties lend themselves better to certain recipes.



Covington

Covington - A favorite for mashing or roasting, the Covington has rose colored skin and super sweet orange flesh. Eat it whole with your favorite toppings or cut into wedges and bake as a side dish.



O'Henry

O'Henry - The O'Henry has a pale copper skin, almost like a potato, but don't be fooled. This tater's white flesh is sweet, creamy and ideal for soups and stews.



Japanese

Japanese - Japanese sweet potatoes have red skin and dry, white flesh. Roast these up with a few of your favorite root veggies for a colorful side dish.

Many types of sweet potatoes are grown in North Carolina. Although some are grown for special uses, the majority are the orange-fleshed, moist, sweet varieties that are widely accepted in the fresh market and for processing. The list of sweet potato varieties changes rapidly and new varieties with superior qualities are released almost annually. Each variety has certain advantages and disadvantages. For a complete comparison of sweet potato varieties, refer to our [variety table](#).



HOW TO STORE

Now that you've found your spud of choice, follow our tips on how to store sweet potatoes so you can have fresh, sweet and delicious sweet potatoes whenever a craving strikes.

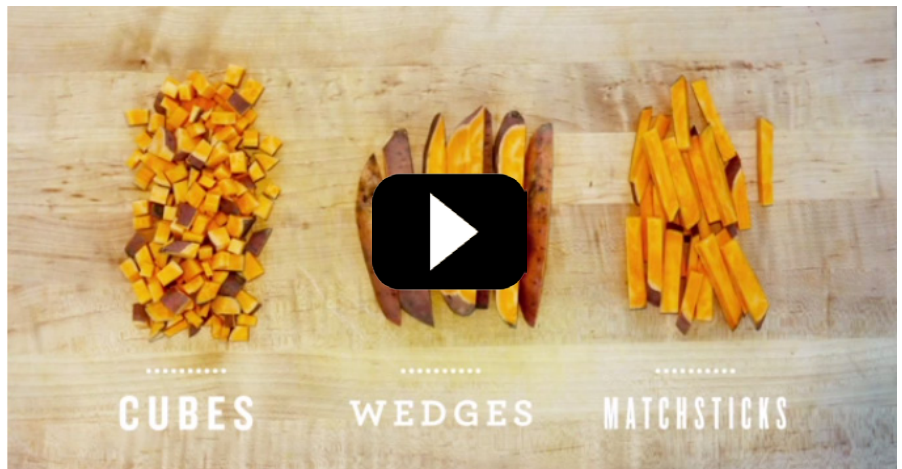
Follow our proper storage procedures carefully in order to prevent your sweet potatoes from bruising or spoiling.

- Avoid storing sweet potatoes in the refrigerator, which will produce a hard center and unpleasant taste.
- Instead, store your sweet potatoes in a cool, dry, well ventilated container. For best results, store them in a basement or root cellar away from strong heat sources.
- Your sweet potatoes can keep for up to two weeks if stored properly.

HOW TO CUT & PREPARE

Matchsticks, cubes, wedges, planks and more! Sweet potatoes are versatile and delicious in every way, shape and form! Not sure how to cut sweet potatoes? You're not alone! A recent consumer research survey showed that 20% of young adults don't feel that sweet potatoes are easy to cook.

To help conquer the sweet-tater trepidation, the North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission partnered with Jeanine Donofrio of the blog *Love & Lemons* to show you how to cut sweet potatoes!



You may have found that larger sweet potatoes can prove difficult to cut. We recommend using a large knife and gently apply your weight forward to thrust the knife through the sweet potato. To avoid browning, rinse the flesh with cold water.

Watch our [video](#) featuring Jeanine to learn how to cut sweet potatoes into matchsticks, cubes and wedges.

ABOUT THE NORTH CAROLINA SWEET POTATO COMMISSION

The North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission Inc. is a nonprofit corporation made up of almost 400 sweet potato growers along with the packers, processors and business associates that support them. The sole purpose of the commission is to increase sweet potato consumption through education, promotional activities, research and honorable horticultural practices among its producers. In 1961, six sweet potato farmers chartered the commission supporting its growers and the sweet potato industry members. North Carolina has proudly been the No. 1 sweet potato producing state in the United States since 1971. For more industry stats, please visit our Industry section of our website.

