LOUISIANA YAMS!

RECIPES WITH JAZZ!

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A Virtuous Vegetable

Sweet potatoes, or yams, contain virtually no fat or sodium and are one of our most nutritionally complete foods. Extremely high in the production of beta carotene, one medium sweet potato also provides almost twice the recommended daily allowance of vitamin A and over one-third of the vitamin C we need in our daily diet. Sweet potatoes also contribute vitamin B6, iron, potassium and fiber.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) ranks the sweet potato number one of all vegetables on its nutritional score card. Foods receive points for their content of dietary fiber, naturally occurring sugars and complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron, and calcium. Points are deducted for fat content (especially saturated fat), sodium, cholesterol, added refined sugars and caffeine. The sweet potato scored 184, with the next highest vegetable being the baked Idaho potato, which scored just 83. The sweet potato also scored significantly higher than spinach, broccoli and Brussels sprouts.

Fresh Yam Selection and Care

When you buy fresh Louisiana yams, choose firm, well-shaped sweet potatoes with bright, clean and smooth skin. Always keep sweet potatoes dry and never refrigerate except after cooking. Cold temperatures are harmful to sweet potatoes.

Microwaving Sweet Potatoes

Microwaved yams have a different texture and flavor from yams cooked conventionally. They do not develop the sweet, syrupy taste of baked yams. Some people like them and others prefer baking yams conventionally, freezing them and reheating them in the microwave. Yams may be microwaved for use in recipes calling for cooked yams.

To microwave yams, scrub them and prick with a fork or knife. This allows steam to escape and prevents the potato from popping. Arrangement is most important. To cook evenly, yams are placed in a circular arrangement with the smaller ends toward the center. Place in oven on paper towel. Rearrange once during cooking time. Let stand three minutes to complete cooking. Dry or old potatoes do not microwave well whole. Peel and dice them before microwaving.

Quantity	Time (On High)
1 potato	4-6 minutes
2 potatoes	6-8 minutes
3 potatoes	8-12 minutes
4 potatoes	12-16 minutes

Spicy Sweet Potato Soup

2 tbsp. unsalted butter
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
6 cups chicken stock
1 lb. sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 cup heavy cream
salt and pepper
Garnish: diced green, yellow & red bell pepper

In a saucepan, melt butter and cook onions and jalapeno until tender, about 2-3 minutes. Add the chicken stock and sweet potatoes and cook until tender, about 30 minutes. Puree the soup to desired consistency in a blender. Add additional stock or water if thinner soup is preferred. Add nutmeg and heavy cream. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve hot with bell pepper garnish. Makes 4 servings.

Fancy Mashed Sweet Potatoes

6 sweet potatoes, baked
1 cup canned, crushed pineapple
3/4 cup pineapple juice
1/2 stick butter or margarine, melted
1/3 tsp. each ground ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg
1 cup walnut pieces
10 marshmallows

Peel and mash baked potatoes. Add pineapple, juice, butter and spices; blend together. Mix in nuts and pour into oiled baking dish. Top with marshmallows and bake for about 40 minutes at 350 degrees. Makes 6-8 servings.

Sweet Potato Taco

6 large sweet potatoes, peeled, cooked and cut 1/4-in. thick
8 6-in. blue corn tortillas
1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
1 cup grated white cheddar cheese
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
1/4 cup honey
salt and pepper
olive oil

Prepare a charcoal grill and allow it to burn down to embers. For each serving, lay 3 slices of sweet potato over half of the tortilla, sprinkle with cheeses, cilantro and honey. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Fold over tortilla and brush with olive oil. Grill for 3 minutes on each side or until crispy and cheese has melted. Makes 8 servings.

Dilled Sweet Potato Soup

(prepare the day before serving)
4 leeks (white parts only) cut into 1/2-in. slices
1 tbsp. olive oil
4 large sweet potatoes, peeled, sliced 1/2-in. thick
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. white pepper
6 cups chicken stock, defatted
1/2 cup light sour cream
2 tbsp. fresh dill, finely chopped

In a large pot, sauté leeks in oil about 5 minutes or until soft. Add potatoes, salt, pepper, and stock and bring to boil. Lower heat to medium and cook, uncovered, for 15 minutes; let cool to room temperature. Pureé in a blender. Chill overnight. Pour into bowls; top each with a dollop of sour cream and a pinch of dill. Makes 6 servings.

Yam Cornbread with Chilies

1/2 cup margarine
1/4 cup granulated brown sugar
1 egg plus 1 egg white
1 tbsp. orange juice
1 cup cooked mashed sweet potato
1/2 cup skim milk
3/4 cup yellow or white cornmeal
3/4 cup unbleached flour
1 tbsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. each cinnamon and cardamon
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup thawed frozen corn kernels
4-oz. can chopped green chilies, rinsed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In an electric mixer or food processor, add margarine; cream until fluffy, 1 1/2 minutes. Add brown sugar; pulse 1 minute. Add egg, egg white, orange juice, sweet potato, and milk. Add dry ingredients; mix well. Fold in corn and green chilies by hand (batter will be thick). Divide mixture into two 9-in. pie tins coated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake until tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 15 minutes. Remove to rack; cool. Makes 16 servings.

Sweet Stir-fried Yams

2 tbsp. oil
2 lbs. sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/2 cup orange juice
1 tbsp. honey
1 cup chicken broth
1/4 tsp. each ground nutmeg & ground cloves
1/2 cup sweetened dried coconut

Heat oil in wok or frying pan over medium-high heat. Add sweet potatoes to hot oil and stir-fry until tender crisp, about 7 minutes. Stir in raisins, orange juice, honey, 1/2 cup broth, cloves and nutmeg. Cover and simmer 10 minutes. Add remaining broth and simmer covered until potatoes are tender and liquid is absorbed. Stir in coconut. Transfer to serving dish and garnish with slivered, roasted almonds if desired. Makes 8 servings.

Curry Ham-Sweet Potato Salad

3 medium-sized sweet potatoes
1 15 1/2-oz. can pineapple chunks
2 cups diced cooked ham
1 small onion, minced
1 bell pepper, chopped
1/2 cup reduced fat or fat free mayonnaise
1 tsp. curry powder
1/4 tsp. paprika
lettuce leaves
1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted

Cook sweet potatoes in boiling water 20-25 minutes or until tender. Drain, let cool to touch and peel. Cut into 1/2-in. cubes. Drain pineapple chunks, reserving 2 tbsp. juice. Combine pineapple, ham, onion and green pepper. Fold in potato cubes. Combine mayonnaise, reserved pineapple juice, curry powder and paprika. Mix well. Line a large salad bowl with lettuce leaves. Place salad mixture over lettuce leaves. Top with mayonnaise mixture. Sprinkle with almonds, cover and chill. Makes 6 servings.

Sweet Potato Biscuits

2 cups flour
1 tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
4 tbsp. sugar
6 tbsp. margarine
4 cups mashed sweet potatoes

Sift together flour, baking powder and salt. Add sugar and margarine to sweet potatoes while hot. Combine potato and flour mixture. Knead for one minute. Roll or pat to 3/4-in. thickness. Cut and bake at 425 degrees 12-15 minutes.

Fried Yam Chips

4 medium yams
solid all-vegetable shortening for frying
salt

Pare yams and cut crosswise into very thin slices. Cover with water and refrigerate overnight. Drain and dry on paper towels. Fry about one third at a time in shortening at 365 degrees for 5-8 minutes, until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with salt. (Other salts or cinnamon sugar can be substituted for salt.)

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