



Connecting School Foods to Curriculum, NJ Farms, and the Kitchen Table

Sweet Potatoes are the featured produce item for Garden State on Your Plate!

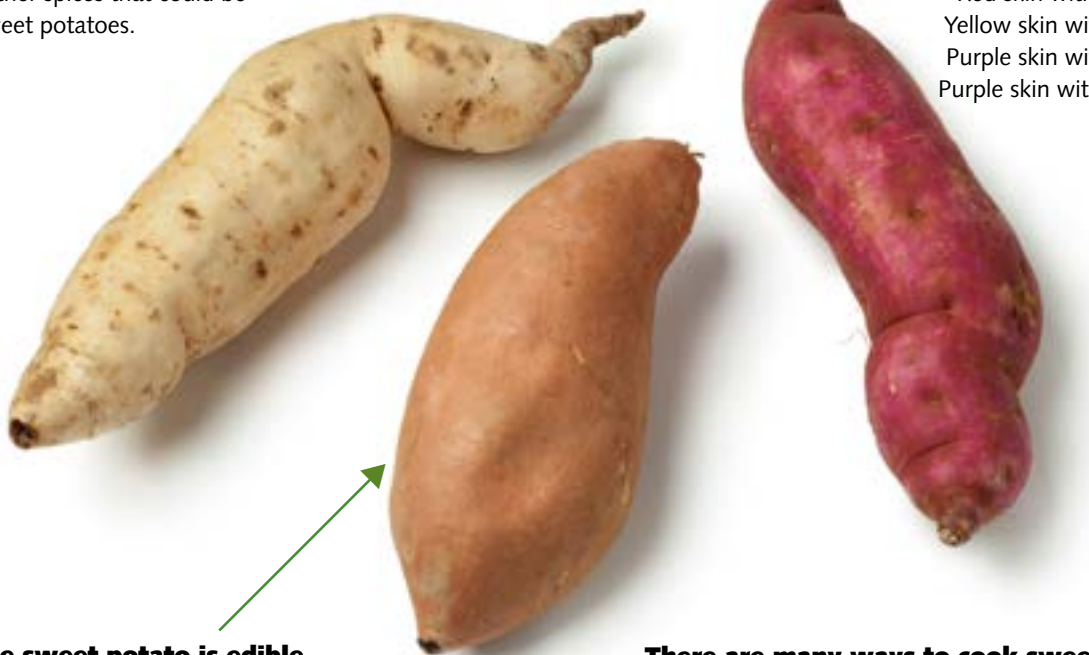
A Garden State on Your Plate Sweet Potato Tasting

To conduct your own Garden State on Your Plate Sweet Potato Tasting, begin by tasting a thin slice of raw sweet potato. Note the texture and flavor. Then taste the same sweet potato cooked in two different ways—steamed (and then mashed) and roasted. Next, season the cooked sweet potatoes with salt and a squeeze of juice from a fresh orange or lime. Note how cooking and seasoning change the texture and flavor of sweet potatoes. Consider other spices that could be used on sweet potatoes.

The skin color of sweet potatoes ranges from tan to orange to red to purple.

The flesh also comes in a range of colors from creamy yellow to orange to purple. There are hundreds of sweet potato varieties, each with a unique flavor and texture. The United States Sweet Potato Council divides those varieties into five basic types:

- Orange skin with orange flesh
- Red skin with orange flesh
- Yellow skin with white flesh
- Purple skin with white flesh
- Purple skin with purple flesh



The entire sweet potato is edible.

Don't remove the skin when baking or roasting sweet potatoes! Sweet potato skin is high in fiber and a good source of antioxidants, especially when the skin is deep orange, red, or purple. Just rinse the skin and rub to remove any dirt. Then bake sweet potatoes, either whole or halved. Or cut them into slices or wedges, toss in olive oil, season, and roast until the flesh is soft and caramelized.

There are many ways to cook sweet potatoes.

They can be boiled, steamed, or fried on the stove top. And they can be roasted or baked in the oven. The flesh of some sweet potatoes is soft and moist when cooked, while the flesh of others is dry and firm. The moist (typically orange-fleshed) varieties are ideal for mashing and baking, while drier (typically white-fleshed) varieties are better for roasting and frying.

See Garden State on Your Plate photos on our website at PSGCOOP.org

A PROJECT OF THE PRINCETON SCHOOL GARDENS COOPERATIVE, PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND METZ CULINARY MANAGEMENT WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE BENT SPOON AND WHOLE EARTH CENTER • NEWSLETTER EDITOR: KARLA COOK

Whipped Sweet Potatoes

adapted from Larry Forgione, *The New York Times* <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/6278-maple-whipped-sweet-potatoes>

These sweet potatoes are roasted, which retains the sweetness and moisture. Or, cook sweet potatoes on the stovetop. Peel, cut into 1-inch cubes, place in a pot of salted water, and simmer until tender, about 20 minutes. When tender, drain them, add butter, and mash until smooth.

4 servings

4 large orange sweet potatoes	Freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature	Pecans, toasted and chopped
Salt	Maple Syrup

Preheat oven to 375°F. Pierce sweet potatoes with a fork or knife. Bake on a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet until very soft, about 45 to 50 minutes. Test for doneness by piercing the largest potato with a thin-bladed knife.

When sweet potatoes are cool enough to handle, cut them in half and scoop pulp into a bowl or food processor. Cut butter into small pieces and add. Using a potato masher or food processor, mash or beat the potatoes until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Top with pecans and a small drizzle of maple syrup, if desired. Serve warm.

Ingredients that Go Well with Sweet Potatoes

allspice • apples • apple cider • bay leaf • black beans • black pepper
brown sugar • butter • cardamom • chiles • cilantro • cinnamon
coconut • collard greens • coriander • cranberries • cream • curry •
feta • garlic • ginger • honey • kale • lentils • lime juice • maple syrup
molasses • mustard greens • nutmeg • olive oil • oranges • parsley
pecans • red bell peppers • red onion sesame oil • thyme • walnuts

Words that Describe the Flavor, Color, and Texture of Sweet Potatoes

astringent • bitter • buttery • candied caramel
• chestnut • cloying • copper creamy • dry
• earthy • garnet • nutty orange • salty •
smooth • starchy sugary • sweet • yellow

GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATE SWEET POTATO FACTS

Sweet potatoes contain 327% of the recommended daily intake of vitamin A, which is more than any other vegetable. Vitamin A is important for cell growth and development, fighting disease and good vision.

Yams and sweet potatoes are not the same. Yams are tubers, like potatoes. Sweet potatoes are considered storage roots, like carrots. While yams can grow as long as 7 feet and can weigh up to 150 pounds, sweet potatoes are usually the size of a potato. Yams are primarily grown in West Africa, with Nigeria leading the way in production.

There are two main varieties of sweet potatoes — pale yellow with dry flesh and dark orange with moist flesh.

Sweet potatoes come in several colors. Their skin can be white, yellow, orange, red or purple.

Sweet potatoes can be eaten raw, just like carrots!

Earliest cultivation records of the sweet potato date to 750 BCE in Peru, although archeological evidence shows cultivation of the sweet potato might have begun around 2500-1850 BCE. By the time Christopher Columbus arrived in the 'New World' in the late 15th century, sweet potatoes were well established as food plants in South and Central America.*

Sweet potatoes were grown by enslaved Americans at Mt. Vernon, the Virginia plantation home of George Washington, our first president.

This tropical crop needs at least four months of warm weather and warm soil. They are drought- and heat-tolerant and have few pests or diseases. Most of our sweet potato acreage is in southern New Jersey.

Sweet potato fields are prepared in April and May and vine cuttings, called slips, are planted in mid- to late May to mid-June.

Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) are the root of a vine in the morning glory family.

*SOURCE: [LIBRARY OF CONGRESS](https://www.libraryofcongress.org/)



Garden State on Your Plate is a series of seasonal produce tastings in the cafeterias at Princeton Public Schools. The emphasis is on a New Jersey produce item, its growth requirements, the different ways it can be prepared, and how the flavor can be altered by the chef and the students. Students learn about farming, climate, and cooking, and they gain flavor power—the ability to personalize their item using salt and citrus. The tastings illustrate and amplify curriculum in the classroom, in the cafeteria, and in the district's Edible Gardens.



Founded in 2005, Princeton School Gardens Cooperative fosters garden- and food-based education in the classroom, cafeteria and community [PSGCOOP.ORG](https://www.psgcoop.org/)

Sweet Potatoes for Black History Month

Sweet potatoes are a rich and foundational ingredient in Black history. Ryan Shepherd, of Southern Kitchen, writes: “In his book, ‘Soul Food: The Surprising Story of An American Cuisine,’ author Adrian Miller explains that the sweet potato was popularized in Europe, and later, in the US because of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which forced the migration of countless human beings and relocated them primarily in the South. Though sweet potatoes were introduced to Africa from South America in the 1600s, other crops – cassava, yams – were far more popular. For the Black community, sweet potatoes were a stand-in for yams of their homeland. “Before you had sweet potato pie, you had something called sweet potato pound, which is a corruption of the Native American word for a type of baked bread,” said Miller. “[Enslaved people] asking for dessert were eating roasted sweet potatoes cooked in the embers of a fire or they started eating mashed up sweet potatoes that were spiced. As [they] got access to cooking technology and equipment, like ovens, that’s when they started to add pie shells’.”

Sweet Potato Pie

adapted from a family recipe handed down to Tomia MacQueen, farmer at Wildflower Farm, Hopewell, and Food Systems Literacy Coordinator for Princeton Public Schools

1 pie, 8 servings

1 pie crust (pre-made)	½ cup white or brown sugar or to taste
Baking beans or uncooked dry beans or rice (1½ to 2 cups)	¼ teaspoon salt
Wax paper	2 eggs
3 medium sweet potatoes (about 1¾ pounds)	1½ tablespoons fresh-squeezed lemon juice
5-1/3 tablespoons salted butter	½ teaspoon nutmeg, or to taste
¼ cup milk (plus 1-2 tablespoons more, if needed)	1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Prebake crust: Heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Place crust in a pie plate if needed, rolling the edges of the crust inward along the pan.
3. Using a fork, prick the bottom of the pie crust evenly. Measure, cut, and place a piece of wax paper sufficient to nestle inside the crust plus excess to function as handles to remove after prebaking.
4. Place baking beans/rice atop the wax-paper lined crust, distributing to provide even weight across bottom and along sides of crust.
5. Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until crust begins to tinge golden along the rim. Remove from oven; let cool for 5-10 minutes. Gather edges of wax paper; carefully lift from crust, using table knife to separate any sticking bits. Set crust aside to cool; save beans/rice for another pie project.
6. Meanwhile, make filling. Peel and cube sweet potatoes to roughly ¾ inch.
7. Boil sweet potatoes in large pot of salted water until soft, checking regularly after about 12 minutes. Remove from heat; drain.
8. Add butter to hot sweet potatoes and mix until smooth. Stir in the ¼ cup milk, sugar, and salt.
9. Add eggs, lemon juice, nutmeg, and vanilla extract, mixing until thick and smooth. Add milk by the tablespoon, if needed, to reach texture slightly thicker than cake batter.
10. Scrape batter into cooled pre-baked crust, leveling the surface with the back of a spoon.
11. Bake for about 1 hour, or until firm (begin checking at 45 minutes).
12. Serve at room temperature; refrigerate leftovers.

Baked Sweet Potatoes

Pre-heat oven to 350°F. Wash sweet potatoes, pat them dry, and carefully place them directly on the oven rack. Place a pan on the rack below them to catch any drippings. Pierce with the tip of a sharp knife to create steam release valve during baking.

Bake until tender until a fork can be easily inserted and removed, about 30 to 45 minutes. Remove potatoes to a plate and cut them open lengthwise. Place a pat of butter on each half and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with cinnamon or nutmeg or brown sugar, if desired.

Peanut and Sweet Potato Stew

by Melissa Thompson, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2023/jan/30/peanut-sweet-potato-stew-recipe-melissa-thompson>

Melissa Thompson, author of "Motherland," writes in The Guardian of this West African peanut stew: "The movement of peanuts around the world tells of the trading routes that saw food, goods and people cross the Atlantic through the Columbian Exchange and beyond."

4-6 servings

- 1 onion, chopped
- Vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1-inch piece ginger, finely grated
- 2 teaspoons ground turmeric
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground fenugreek
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped into 1-inch cubes
- 2 quarts vegetable stock
- 1 14-ounce can red kidney beans, drained
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter (can substitute other nut/seed butter)
- 2 bunches spinach, double-washed, stalks removed, and roughly chopped
- Sea salt
- Cooked brown or white rice

1. In a Dutch pot or large saucepan, fry the onion in a little oil. After 8 minutes, add the garlic and ginger, and cook for another couple of minutes before adding the spices, mixed with a little water to prevent them burning. Stir and cook until the spices become aromatic.
2. Add the sweet potatoes and stir to coat, then pour in the stock, and add the beans and peanut butter. Put a lid on the pot and cook for 10-15 minutes until the sweet potatoes are soft.
3. Remove the lid, mix in the spinach and leave for 5 minutes until cooked. Taste, then add salt until seasoned as you prefer.
4. Serve over hot rice.

Tamales de Camote con Frijol

Sweet Potato and Black Bean Tamales

by Pati Jinich, <https://patijinich.com/sweet-potato-and-black-bean-tamales/>

12-16 tamales

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes
- 1 cup lard or vegetable shortening
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher or coarse sea salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1-2/3 cups corn masa flour or masa harina (such as Maseca)
- 1/2 cup vegetable or chicken broth
- 24 dried corn husks
- 2 cups refried beans*
- 1 cup Mexican crema (optional)
- 1 cup queso fresco, crumbled (optional)

(Instructions on next page)

1. Preheat oven to 450°F
2. Wrap sweet potatoes in aluminum foil. Bake for 45-50 minutes, or until cooked and soft. Remove from oven; when cool enough to handle, cut open and scoop out cooked pulp into a bowl. Set aside.
3. Make tamales masa: Place lard/vegetable shortening and ½ teaspoon salt into mixing bowl. Beat at medium speed until very light, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low, add baking powder and sugar, and alternate adding corn masa and the broth. Raise speed to medium and beat for another 6-7 minutes, or until mixture appears fluffy.
4. Assemble: Soak dried husks in hot water for a couple of minutes, or until they are pliable. Drain. Lay out husk with tapering end toward you. Spread about 1/3 cup masa into a 2-3-inch square about ¼ inch thick, leaving a border of at least ½ inch on the sides. Place about two teaspoons of refried beans in the middle of the masa square. Pick up the two long sides of the corn husk and bring them together. (The masa will begin to swaddle the filling). Fold them to one side, rolling them in the same direction around the tamale. Fold the empty section of the husk with the tapering end, from the bottom up, to form a closed bottom and an open top. Gently squeeze the bottom to the top to even the filling. Place assembled tamales as upright as possible in a container.
5. Place water in the bottom pan of a steamer, so that water is under the steamer basket/rack. Bring to simmer. Line steamer with one or two layers of soaked corn husks. Place tamales vertically into prepared steamer, with open end facing up. Fill any open space with corn husks to stabilize tamales during cooking. Cover with more corn husks and steam, covered, for 55-60 minutes. Tamales are done when they peel easily from the husks.
6. Serve with crema and/or crumbled queso fresco if desired.

* *To make refried beans in a traditional way, mash cooked pinto or black beans in the pan with sauteed onion or place in the blender to make a smooth puree to thicken and season.*

Sweet Potato and Zucchini Locro

by Peru Delights, <https://perudelights.com/sweet-potato-and-zucchini-locro-the-ultimate-vegetarian-dish/>

In this version of a traditional and hearty Andean highlands recipe, potatoes are replaced with sweet potatoes, and pumpkin is replaced with zucchini. Locro has as many variations as there are South American kitchens and traditionally is eaten on Argentinian holidays and national feast days.

4 servings

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon+1 teaspoon ahi amarillo paste (optional)
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 large zucchini, cubed
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 quart vegetable stock or water
- 1 cup corn kernels (canned or frozen)
- 1 cup green peas
- 1 cup cubed tofu or feta cheese
- 1 cup heavy cream or half-and-half
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro

1. Heat oil in large sauté pan over medium heat. Saute onion for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add garlic; saute for an additional minute or so, continuing to stir.
2. Add chili pepper paste if using, along with sweet potato, zucchini, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring continuously for two minutes, and add vegetable stock or water.
3. When mixture returns to boil, lower heat and cover pan.
4. Cook for 20 minutes; add corn and peas, and cook for an additional 3-4 minutes.
5. Remove from heat. Add tofu or cheese; add cream, and stir.
6. Serve, topped with chopped cilantro.