

Which Potato Should I Buy?

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Those of us in Kansas are used to eating meat and potatoes almost everyday. Who doesn't enjoy mashed potatoes with chicken noodles on a cold gray day in the winter, or eating potato casseroles? There are many varieties of potatoes in the grocery store, so how do you choose which potato to buy for which situation? While many shoppers choose potatoes based on personal preference, there are some guidelines to help choose the right potato for the right recipe.

Potato preparation is based on two quality characteristics, starch and moisture content. These two components can determine the best way to cook them.

High starch/low moisture – The russet potato fits in this category. The high solids content yields a dry, fluffy, mealy texture well suited for baking, mashing, frying, or pureeing. They also make good French fries.

Low to medium starch/high to medium moisture – Red and yellow potatoes fit in this category. They have a waxy texture which makes them good for boiling, steaming, braising, stewing, in salads, or any other recipe where potatoes need to remain intact. They don't absorb much water during cooking, so they have a smooth, creamy texture.

Here are some common varieties and their uses:

Russet – baking, mashing, frying, roasting

Whites – boiling, steaming, mashing, baking, roasting and in casseroles (scaloped and au gratin), soups and salads.

Reds – boiling, roasting, steaming and in casseroles (scaloped and au gratin), soups and salads.

Yellows – baking, boiling, mashing or roasting.

Blue/Purple – bake or mash, French fry, steam, or boil.

Fingerlings – steam, bake, or boil; also good in salads.

Potatoes can provide essential nutrients such as potassium, Vitamin C, and fiber. They are suitable for those with digestive issues, and by themselves, they are fat-free, gluten-free, plant-based, and they are often affordable.

Enjoy your family gatherings and keep safe food handling tips in mind for the health of your family members. For further information on nutrition programming such as Dining with Diabetes or Planning Family Meals, please contact Sandy Haggard, Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent, Southwind District, SJHaggard@ksu.edu or 620.365.2242.

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