

Defending potatoes

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About 22% of the potatoes grown in the U.S. are made into chips. And Americans eat more chips—an average of 4 pounds per person per year—than any other country, reports the USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

The most healthful way to eat potatoes is right out of the ground ... washed, of course.

Like most foods, the less you change a spud from its original self, the more dense its nutrients. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, a medium-sized (5.3 ounce) potato in its own skin provides 110 calories mostly in the form of complex carbs (starch). This humble vegetable contains more potassium than a banana, 30% of our daily vitamin C needs and as much fiber as a slice of whole wheat bread. And if we don't fry it or smother it in butter and sour cream, our spud is free of fat and cholesterol with just a scant amount of sodium.

Potatoes have been studied for their contribution to sports nutrition. They are good source of carbohydrates—the primary fuel for muscles, nerves and brains. And although you'd have to eat a lot of potatoes to get all the the [protein](#) you need in a day, a 2022 study reported in the journal of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* that a dose of protein concentrated from potatoes had a similar effect on stimulating muscle growth as milk protein. Pretty cool.

Contrary to common thought, all the nutrients in a potato do not reside just in the skin. More than half the nutrients in spuds are found in the flesh. The skin, however, is a good source of dietary fiber.

And no need for people with diabetes to totally avoid [potatoes](#), say the experts at the American Diabetes Association. Just watch your [portion sizes](#). A medium potato contains about the same amount of carbs as 2/3 cup of cooked pasta.

Like other food crops, potato production fluctuates with [weather conditions](#) as well as other factors. And indeed, fewer spuds were harvested over these past couple of years.

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