

Potatoes

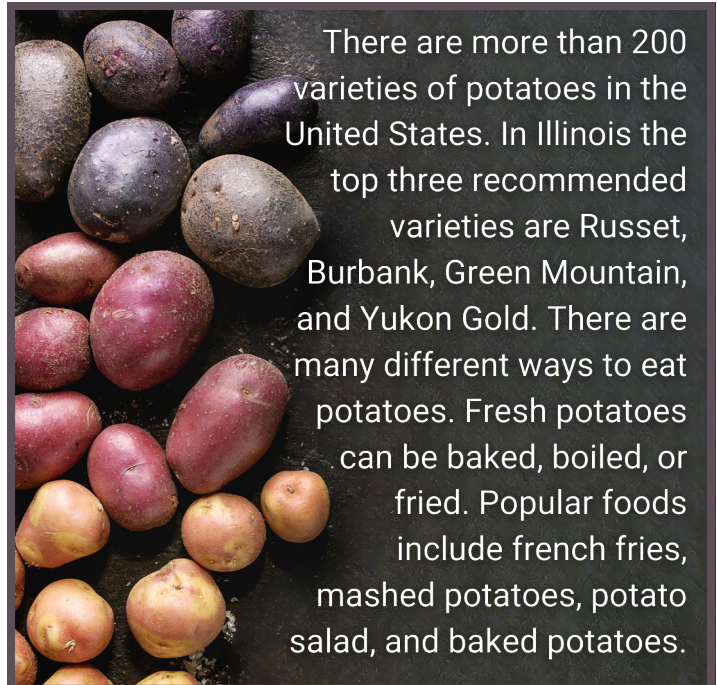


Potatoes are grown underground on a specialized stem called a stolon. Potatoes are considered tubers, which means they are a stem vegetable, not a root vegetable! In 2022, the United States produced about 21,965,608 tons of potatoes over 895,600 acres of land.

Potatoes are grown in almost every state. Idaho grows 30% of the the potatoes in the United States. While potatoes are most popular in the western states, Illinois produces around 195,000 tons of potatoes each year.



Most potatoes are planted in fields. Farmers use a technique called hilling to get the best yield out of the plants. This keeps weeds and other pests away from the potatoes, helping them stay healthy. Once potatoes sprout, they stem above ground and produce non-edible flowers. What many consider the “root” of a potato plant is actually a stem, making potatoes “tubers.”



There are more than 200 varieties of potatoes in the United States. In Illinois the top three recommended varieties are Russet, Burbank, Green Mountain, and Yukon Gold. There are many different ways to eat potatoes. Fresh potatoes can be baked, boiled, or fried. Popular foods include french fries, mashed potatoes, potato salad, and baked potatoes.



Meet the Neumiller Family

Neumiller Farms | Savanna, IL

Tell us about your farm.

We grow eight varieties of potatoes, along with sweet corn, field corn, and soybeans. We always plant a cover crop of winter rye on all fields that did not have field corn. In the spring we disk up the rye and work it back into soil for added nutrients. We aim for a four-year crop rotation with each of our four crops. That way we can add nutrients back into the soil without synthetic inputs. Rotation also disrupts pest and disease cycles.

How do you harvest potatoes?

We use implements that get towed behind tractors. The harvester gently goes about 8" into the ground and scoops out the potatoes. From there they travel on conveyor belts that transfer them to trucks. The trucks bring the potatoes to our grading facility. Once in the warehouse they get washed and checked over. Since the potatoes come right out of the earth, we get non potato items that need to be graded out before they are sold. Examples of non-potato items are golf balls, soda cans, tools, hats, etc.

How do you prepare potatoes to be sold?

Once the potatoes have been washed and inspected, we load them onto semis. The semis deliver them to our wholesale customers. We deliver potatoes to Wisconsin, Missouri, Georgia, Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana, and North Dakota. We have even shipped potatoes to South Korea and Saudi Arabia!

What is your favorite way to eat potatoes?

There really isn't a bad way to eat potatoes! But if I had to choose, my favorite is mashed.



All photos on this page courtesy of Neumiller Farms