Most people like potatoes because they are fairly inexpensive and can be used in many ways on your menu. Have you made potato soup, garlic mashed potatoes, oven-roasted potatoes or baked fries?

Potatoes sometimes have the reputation of being “fattening.” Actually, some of the toppings that you add to a potato may add a lot of calories. If you like higher-calorie toppings such as bacon, sour cream and cheese, add a smaller amount to trim the calories.

- A medium-sized red potato (about 3 inches in diameter) with skin has 150 calories, 0.3 grams (g) fat, 4 g protein, 34 g carbohydrate, 3.6 g fiber and 38 milligrams sodium.
- Potatoes are an excellent source of potassium and vitamin C, and they provide many other vitamins and minerals. Potassium helps maintain a healthy blood pressure.

**Bake them.**
Here’s how to make a baked potato with a tender, flaky texture. Start with a “baking potato” such as a brown-skinned Russet:

- Preheat oven to 400 F.
- Rinse the potatoes under cold running water and scrub with a vegetable brush.
- Dry with a paper towel.
- Remove any bruises with the tip of a knife.
- Poke with a fork or knife four or five times (to allow the steam to escape during baking and avoid a mess in your oven).
- For crisp skin, rub the outside lightly with vegetable oil and salt lightly.
- Bake about 45 minutes.
- **Note:** Alternatively, you can bake potatoes at 350 F for 60 minutes.

**Top them creatively with these ideas:**

- Leftover chili with kidney beans
- Leftover broccoli-cheese soup
- Shredded roast chicken, beef or pork mixed with barbecue sauce
- Plain Greek yogurt sprinkled with chives
- Salsa and finely shredded cheddar cheese

*Did you know? North Dakota is a leading producer of potatoes in the U.S.*
My potatoes always seem to spoil or sprout before I use them. I had them in a cabinet under my kitchen sink. Where should I store them?

Warm temperature and moisture can cause potatoes to spoil more quickly. For longer storage, store potatoes in a cool, dark, dry spot away from heat sources such as your stove or dishwasher. Keep them in a paper bag or a bag with small holes to allow for air circulation.

Always buy the amount of perishable food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, that you can use in a reasonable time. As you plan your menus, use your perishable foods first. For a variety of potato recipes, visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and type “potato recipes” in the search bar. For longer storage, you can freeze, dry or can many types of fresh produce. See www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and click on “Food Preservation” for more information.

FoodWi$e Tip of the Month

If you have too many potatoes to use before they spoil, freeze them with these simple steps.

- Choose fresh potatoes about 1 to 1½ inches in diameter.
- Scrub thoroughly. Skins can be left on if you wish.
- Blanch the potatoes in boiling water for three to five minutes if smaller than 1 to 1½ inches in diameter and eight to 10 minutes if larger. The potato should be heated all the way through. Otherwise, the inside will turn dark. “Blanching” stops the natural chemicals (enzymes) that may cause the potato to turn gray or brown during frozen storage.
- Cool, drain, pack in freezer bags or containers labeled with contents and date, and freeze at 0 F.

Oven-baked Fries

- 2 large potatoes, cut into wedges
- 4 tsp. olive oil or other oil
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. dried thyme (optional)

Preheat oven to 450 F. Mix the potato wedges with oil, salt and thyme (if using). Spread the wedges on a baking pan. Bake until browned and tender, about 20 minutes. Turn them once halfway through.

Makes five servings. Each serving has 180 calories, 5 grams (g) fat, 4 g protein, 32 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 310 milligrams sodium.

Just for Fun

Why did the potatoes argue?
Because they couldn’t see eye to eye.

Contact the local office of the NDSU Extension Service for more information on food and nutrition or managing your food dollar.