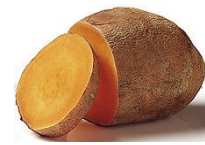


Sweet Potato



Sweet potatoes originated in the tropical regions of Mexico, Central and South America, as well as the West Indies. Their botanical name *Ipomoea batata*, was derived from the American Indians of Louisiana who were growing them in native gardens as early as 1540. The Indians referred to sweet potatoes as *batatas*. Christopher Columbus discovered them being grown and carried them back to Spain. Because of the cooler climate of most of Europe, the sweet potato did not flourish there as it has in the Americas.



North Carolina is the number one producer of sweet potatoes in the United States! It is also the official vegetable of North Carolina thanks to a group of school students from Wilson, NC. In 1993, Mrs. Celia Batchelor's fourth grade civics class at Elvie Street School was visited by Representative Gene Arnold from Wilson County. His visit inspired the students to become involved in their state government, and they, along with their parents and teachers, began a letter writing campaign to the NC State Legislature requesting that the sweet potato be named as the state vegetable. After two years of hard work, the sweet potato was declared the Official Vegetable of the State of North Carolina in 1995.



Not only are sweet potatoes and yams completely different vegetables, a sweet potato isn't even a potato!! These root vegetables are all from completely different plant families.

Sweet potatoes can be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, baked, microwaved, or fried. No matter how they are prepared, they are very nutritious. One medium size sweet potato provides twice the daily recommended allowance of vitamin A, one third the allowance of vitamin C, and is high in beta carotene, iron, potassium and fiber.

