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Tuber-ific

There's more to potatoes than just Idaho. Lots more.

By: Judith Hausman

Familiar potatoes are a go-to comfort food, but oversized bakers, cute coin-sized red potatoes, and creamy yellow Yukon Golds are just the start of their versatility. Chefs and farmers are experimenting with new colored potatoes, as well as classic or heritage varieties, that hark back to the potato's Andean beginnings and are bred more for "potato-y" taste than just for keeping qualities.

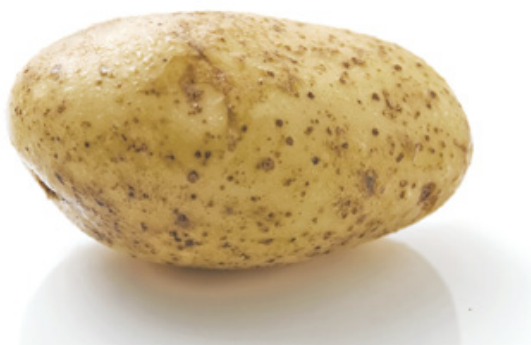
Potato size, shape, and color all are dictated by the variety of the potato. The novelty colors are the result of phytochemicals that make them beneficially high in antioxidants. So the novelty also is healthy!

In addition, different varieties have different cooking properties. Some can bake up moist, or floury and dry; some mash creamily or stay intact when boiled for potato salads or stews.

"New potato" is sometimes used to describe all small, waxy potatoes but, technically, it refers just to immature potatoes harvested in the spring and early summer.

Red, white, and blue potato salads, purple fries, or lavender mashed potatoes are deliciously novel and visually stunning. No special treatment is required, though; simply steam or simmer in broth and then glaze with butter to preserve their color and taste.

Store all potatoes in a cool, dark, dry, well-ventilated place. Don't refrigerate them—doing so converts some of the potatoes' starch to sugar. And don't expose them to direct sunlight, which turns them greenish and makes them bitter.



POTATO: Carolas

ABOUT: Classic "Irish" potatoes: golden-skinned, golden-fleshed potatoes with a creamy, smooth texture and exceptionally rich flavor.

WHERE TO TRY: Order from the virtual Hudson Valley farmers' market mypersonalfarmers.com; (914) 293-0701. "I never thought I would get excited by potato varieties," says mypersonalfarmers.com co-owner Maryanne Hedrick of Cortlandt Manor, "but these Carolas from Sheldon Farms of Salem, New York, are so spectacularly fresh, earthy, and creamy."