**How to Cook Sweet Potatoes**



They look like orange-tinged potatoes, yet taste like dessert due to their natural sweetness. While most people think [sweet potatoes](https://www.healthnutnews.com/7803-2/) are nothing more than a healthy and interesting replacement for potatoes, they actually offer a lot of benefits for your health — from helping minimize your risk of obesity1 to inhibiting the growth of cancer cells, to name a few. By learning how to cook sweet potatoes properly, you can maximize their flavor and preserve the valuable nutrients they have to offer.

But first — what is a sweet potato?

The sweet potato (Ipomoea batatas) belongs to the Convolvulaceae plant family, which includes other flowering plants like water spinach, the morning glory and chokeweed. It’s native to tropical parts of the Americas, from the Caribbean to the southeastern U.S., having been cultivated there for at least 5,000 years.Relics of sweet potatoes have even been unearthed in Peruvian caves in South America. These relics were said to be 10,000 years old, which makes them one of the oldest vegetables known to mankind.

About 400 sweet potato varieties exist, and they differ by the color of their skin and flesh. Their hues can vary, ranging from cream, yellow and orange to pink or purple. Sweet potato’s benefits come from an impressive array of nutrients, which include potassium, protein, vitamins C and A, sodium, calcium, phosphorus and magnesium. In the U.S., more than half of commercially grown sweet potatoes hail from the southern states, particularly North Carolina.

Sweet potatoes versus yams

Many people often confuse sweet potatoes with yams, which are starchy root vegetables that actually belong to the Dioscoreaceae family and are native to Africa and Asia. According to The Kitchn, yams, compared to sweet potatoes, are drier and starchier and their skin is bark-like, with a black or brown color. When peeled, the skin is either white, purple or a reddish color.

True yams aren’t actually common in the U.S., but what makes it confusing is that U.S. grocery stores label “soft” sweet potato varieties as “yams,” while “firm” sweet potatoes retain their name. So when you’re out shopping, make sure you confirm that you’re buying real yams.

How long to cook sweet potatoes

The time it takes for sweet potatoes to cook depends on the method you choose. Sweet potatoes contain beta-carotene, one of the nutrients that make them beneficial to your health. The best ways to improve the bioavailability of beta-carotene is to steam or bake the sweet potatoes. This makes the nutrient more accessible for your body.

The Kitchn notes that baking sweet potatoes can take up to an hour, at a temperature of 375 degrees F or higher. Boiling sweet potatoes is not recommended, as it can destroy many of the healthy compounds in this food. If you want to cook sweet potatoes quickly, steaming is the better option. According to Bon Appetit, steaming makes the potatoes’ flesh “pudding-like and fluffy.” This method works best on smaller potatoes. If done correctly, it will only take 20 to 30 minutes to cook.

How to cook sweet potatoes in the oven

As mentioned, cooking sweet potatoes in the oven can take as long as an hour. Here’s an easy recipe on how to bake sweet potatoes

Perfect Baked Sweet Potato Recipe

Ingredients

* 4 sweet potatoes, scrubbed clean
* 4 tablespoons organic grass fed butter
* Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Procedure

* Heat oven to 425 degrees F.
* Place sweet potatoes on a baking sheet and prick with a fork.
* Let bake until tender. This can take between 45 and 50 minutes.
* Allow to cook, then split the tops open using a knife. Top with a pat of butter.
* Season with salt and pepper before serving.

How to cook sweet potatoes on the stove

Steaming is the best way to cook sweet potatoes on the stove, and if you’re in a hurry, here’s one tip: Cut the sweet potatoes in small pieces to let them cook faster. This recipe, adapted from the George Mateljan Foundation,15 is one of the fastest ways to cook sweet potatoes — it only takes a few minutes!

7-Minute ‘Quick Steamed’ Sweet Potatoes

Serving size: 2

Ingredients

* 2 medium sweet potatoes
* 3 tablespoons coconut oil
* 2 medium garlic cloves
* Sea salt and pepper to taste

Optional ingredients:

* 1/2 onion, sliced (you can cook this with the sweet potatoes)
* 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
* 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
* 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

Procedure

* Put water in the bottom part of the steamer, at least 2 inches high.
* Turn on the stove and wait for the steam to build up. While waiting, press or finely chop the garlic and allow it to sit for at least five minutes.
* Peel the sweet potatoes then cut into 1/2-inch cubes.
* Once the water comes to a boil, add the sweet potatoes to the steamer tray. Cover with a tight-fitting lid and let steam for seven minutes. Once tender enough to easily press a fork through, the potatoes are ready.
* Transfer to a bowl and, while they are still hot, toss with the remaining ingredients.

Other sweet potato recipes you can try

Sweet potatoes are a versatile ingredient and there are a number of ways to serve them. They can be the star of the meal or just a supporting player. Sweet potatoes can even be served as a sweet dessert. Here are a few recipes you can make at home:

Loaded Southwestern Stuffed Sweet Potato Recipe

Ingredients

* 2 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed clean
* 1/2 cup diced bell peppers
* 2/3 cup black beans, rinsed and drained
* 1/8 teaspoon ground cumin
* 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
* 2 limes, juiced
* Salsa
* 1/2 avocado, diced
* Cilantro, to garnish (optional)

Procedure

* Heat oven to 400 degrees F. Use a fork to prick holes in potatoes. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until flesh is soft.
* Mix peppers, cumin, black beans, chili powder and lime juice in a bowl. Set aside to let flavors develop.
* Remove sweet potatoes from oven. Cut slits down each lengthwise, and pull apart to create a well for fillings.
* Spoon 2 tablespoons salsa and bean mixture into each potato. Top with avocado and cilantro, if desired.

Healthy Sweet Potato Casserole Recipe

Serving size: 12

Ingredients

* 3 pounds sweet potatoes (look for those that are about the same size, so they cook evenly)
* 1 1/2 cups raw pecan pieces, divided
* 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
* 1 teaspoon Himalayan salt, divided
* 2 tablespoons coconut oil, divided
* 2/3 cup coconut milk
* 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
* 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
* 1 large egg

Procedure

* Heat oven to 400 degrees F.
* Use a fork or sharp knife to poke the sweet potatoes several times. Roast in the oven until soft. This may take about 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the size of the potatoes.
* Allow the potatoes to cool for 10 to 15 minutes. Once cooled, split and scrape out their flesh into a bowl. Remove the peels. Lower the oven temperature to 375 degrees F.
* Put together the topping: In a food processor or blender, pulse 1 cup of the pecans into a meal. Add a teaspoon of cinnamon, a pinch of salt and 1 tablespoon of the coconut oil and blend again until well-mixed. Add in the remaining 1/2 cup of the pecan pieces by hand. Set aside.
* Put the sweet potato flesh and coconut milk into the food processor or blender and process. Add the remaining tablespoon of coconut oil. If you don’t have a food processor, you can use a potato masher, although the texture will be less smooth.
* Add the remaining cinnamon, the nutmeg, a teaspoon of salt and the black pepper. Taste, and when they taste good to you, add the egg and blend again.
* Spread this mixture in a lightly oiled baking dish and sprinkle with the pecan topping. Bake for 10 to 20 minutes or until the topping starts to brown.

Thyme-Roasted Sweet Potatoes Recipe

Serving size: 6 to 8

Ingredients

* 4 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 1/2-inch-thick rounds
* 1/3 cup fresh thyme leaves, plus 6 thyme sprigs for garnish
* 1/3 cup fresh thyme sprigs
* 3 tablespoons coconut oil
* 4 large garlic cloves, minced
* 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
* 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Procedure

* Heat oven to 450 degrees F.
* In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients and toss.
* On a baking sheet or in a 13×9-inch baking dish, arrange the slices in a single layer.
* Place on the top rack of your oven and roast until tender and slightly browned, about 40 minutes.
* Garnish with thyme sprigs. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Sweet potatoes are truly a tasty treat for your health

Sweet potatoes are great for any age, even for infants who are just starting to eat solid foods. Try pureeing them with mashed avocado or cooked carrots and peas to make homemade baby food. Despite their sweet flavor, sweet potatoes are also good for diabetics, as they have a low glycemic index.

One additional tip: Eat sweet potatoes with a small amount of fat, like grass fed butter or coconut oil. Since the beta-carotene sweet potatoes contain is fat-soluble, the added healthy fat will help the beta-carotene to be absorbed well by your body.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about cooking sweet potatoes

Q: How should you cook sweet potatoes for your baby?

A: According to The Bump, sweet potatoes can be given to babies who are around 6 months old.Steam and then puree them with other vegetables like carrots and peas, or with fruit like avocado.

Q: Are yams sweet potatoes?

A: No, yams are not the same as sweet potatoes. They come from different plant families. In U.S. grocery stores, however, “soft” sweet potatoes are sometimes called yams.

Q: Are sweet potatoes healthy?

A: Yes, they are. They contain potassium, protein, vitamins C and A, sodium, calcium, phosphorus and magnesium.

Q: How many carbs are there in a sweet potato?

A: According to the USDA National Nutrient Database, a 100-gram serving of boiled sweet potatoes can have 76 calories.