



NEWS RELEASE

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????? Yam or Sweet Potato?????

How about some small talk for your holiday meal? Is it a yam or a sweet potato? What do you think? Here are a few facts to clear up the confusion.

A "true yam" is a large, starchy root (up to 100 pounds) that is native to Africa and Asia. We seldom find "true yams" in the United States. What we do find is two varieties of sweet potatoes—one is moist and orange-fleshed; the other is drier and yellow. Both are native American plants and were a staple food for the early settlers. Shippers and producers in the Southern United States wanted to distinguish between the yellow and orange variety so they adopted the African word "nyami" (which referred to the "true yam") using its English form, "yam".

The yam and the sweet potato in our local stores are both very high in Vitamin A while the "true yam" has no Vitamin A. Some stores list the nutrient content for "true yams" so consumers mistakenly think that the yam (really a sweet potato) has no Vitamin A. One-half cup sweet potatoes or yams contains 170 calories, 560% of the daily value for Vitamin A, 46% of the daily value for Vitamin C, and 12% of the daily value for Dietary Fiber (percentages are based on a 2000 calorie diet).

Nutritious??? Yes!!! So here are some suggestions on how to incorporate more sweet potatoes or yams into your diet.

- Wash, prick in several places with a fork, and bake for 30-60 minutes (depending on the size) or boil for 20-30 minutes. Both versions can be mashed and eaten as is.
- Peel a small sweet potato or yam and chop into bite-size pieces. Add to your favorite homemade vegetable soup.

Holiday Sweet Potato Custard

1 cup mashed cooked sweet potato	½ teaspoon salt
½ cup very ripe mashed banana (about 2 small bananas)	¼ cup raisins
1 cup evaporated skim milk	1 tablespoon sugar
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 beaten egg whites or ¼ cup egg substitute	Non-stick spray coating

In a medium bowl, stir together sweet potato and banana. Add milk, blending well. Add brown sugar, beaten egg whites or egg substitute, and salt, mixing thoroughly. Spray a 1-quart casserole or pie pan with non-stick spray coating. Transfer sweet potato mixture to slightly greased casserole or pie pan. Combine raisins, sugar, and cinnamon; sprinkle over top of sweet potato mixture. Bake in a preheated 300^o F. oven for 45-75 minutes, depending upon the depth of the pan or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

Adapted from: MayoClinic Diet & Nutrition Resource Center's "Ask the Mayo Dietitian" at <http://www.mayohealth.org/mayo/askdiet/htm/new/qd980408htm>. and Texas A&M Horticulture Program, "What is the Difference Between a Sweet Potato and a Yam" at

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/vegetables/sweetpotato.html>

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