

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

August 13, 2009

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**One Potato, Two Potato**

For a lot of families summer is prime time for big bowls of potato salad. You can make it with mayo or boiled dressing, add sweet relish or sour dill pickles, make it yellow with mustard and egg yolks or keep it creamy white. It's up to you. But unless you start with the right kind of potatoes you'll end up with salad-flavored lumpy mashed potatoes, not cubes of potato salad. Pick your potatoes wisely!

Despite the hundreds of different sizes, shapes and colors of potatoes, there are really only two basic kinds. One kind is called 'mealy' and the other is 'waxy'. None have anything like cornmeal, and certainly none have any wax in them. The names give us an idea though of what they are like when they are cooked.

Mealy potatoes fall apart when they're boiled. They get dry and fluffy, sort of 'mealy'. This characteristic makes them the best kind for mashed potatoes, baked potatoes, and for frying. In these foods we want to be able to fluff the potatoes up when we add butter or cream as we mash them, or when we top a steaming baked potatoes with sour cream. And when we make french fries we want the inside of the fry to be fluffy and tender. Mealy potatoes often have blue or purple skins, but also include russets and fingerling potatoes. If you want to make great mashed potatoes get russets, Idaho or baking potatoes, the ones with a thick, rough skin.

Waxy potatoes on the other hand stick together. The cells in waxy type potatoes don't fall apart when they are boiled. They keep their shape. They can be cut into

cubes, slices or shredded into hash browns and still stick together when they're cooked. These potatoes stay moist and dense, not light and fluffy. Waxy potatoes have thin white or red skins. Yukon Golds, the yellow fleshed potatoes, are also good for boiling.

Once you've chosen your potatoes according to how you plan to cook them, treat them right. Don't give them a cold. Potatoes are mostly starch, but they still have active enzymes. If potatoes get too cold the enzymes start changing starch into sugar. Potatoes that have been chilled might taste a bit sweeter, but what you will notice if you fry them is that they get too dark too fast. Sugar browns much faster than starch.

The ideal temperature for keeping potatoes is between 45 and 50° F. The refrigerator is not the best place to store potatoes because it's too cold. Unfortunately the countertop might be too warm a place to store them, so the best thing is to not keep them very long. Just get as many as you will use in week or two, not more.

If you find a potato sending out sprouts, break the sprouts off and cut out a bit at the base of the sprout. Don't eat the sprouts! If a potato is turning green, peel off all the green area. Green potatoes have been sunburnt and the green areas should not be eaten. It could take a lot to have a visible effect, but eating green potatoes and potato spouts can be toxic, causing stomach upset and nervous system damage.

To help keep the pieces of potato together as they boil, add a tablespoon of vinegar to each 2 cups of water. The acid in the vinegar slows down how fast the potato cells fall apart. It also adds a little bit more flavor to the cubes even before you add the mayonnaise. Some people prefer the extra flavor of sour pickle juice. Either will work.

Here's a recipe for potato salad that's more colorful and nutritious than the usual.

Be sure to use the right potatoes!

Hungarian Potato Salad

2 large white or yellow potatoes	1 carrot
1 cup cauliflower florets	1/2 cup fresh or frozen green peas
1/4 cup light mayonnaise	2 tsp lemon juice
1 hard-cooked egg, chopped	2 black olives, minced

salt and pepper to taste

Peel and cube potatoes and carrot, cook until tender. Cut cauliflower into bite-size pieces, steam until just barely tender. Cook peas if necessary. Combine all in large bowl. Mix mayonnaise, lemon juice, salt and pepper in small bowl. Stir in chopped eggs and olives. Stir gently into potato mixture until coated. Cover and chill at least 2 hours or until serving. Serves 4.

(Recipe from Simply Florida, cookbook of the Extension Service)

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING