

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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

Potatoes on Your Plate? Why Not!

Lots of families seem to be changing their traditional holiday menus by eliminating the bowls of creamy mashed potatoes. But turkey gravy just doesn't flow as well over quinoa or mashed cauliflower, does it? And despite being popular, the ideas that potatoes will make you fat or raise your glycemic index just don't seem to be true. In fact, potatoes are good sources of fiber and minerals. So feel free to put potatoes back on the menu.

While the ideas behind glycemic index measures seem right, the truth is that they don't mean much in real, everyday living. Why? Because we don't eat just one plain food at a time. How we cook the foods makes a difference too. If you could start with one humongous potato, then bake part, boil part and fry part, eat a bit of each part at a different time of the day, and share some of each part with your friends, every time any of you ate some of it you could get a different glycemic index measure. Plus, if you added anything to the potato - some butter, some meat, some salad, they would change the measurement too. And how many of us eat just plain potato? Not very many!

Another little fact that makes glycemic index numbers not very useful is that a cold cooked potato has less digestible starch than a freshly cooked one. No, the cooking didn't magically make the starch disappear. What happens in the potato is that as cooked starch cools, it changes slightly. It changes into 'resistant starch' and becomes resistant to digestion. It acts more like fiber rather than starch.

Because we don't digest it resistant starch slows down our digestion and absorption of the rest of the meal, just like most dietary fiber does. That means our blood sugar doesn't go up as far or as fast. It can also help us feel full longer. So maybe a cold potato salad is better than freshly mashed potatoes? That's not for certain yet. And it would depend on how much mayo you use to make the salad. But it does mean that potatoes are not as bad for you as you might think.

Freshly cooked or leftover from yesterday, potatoes are good sources of fiber. Even if you don't eat the skin, potatoes still have a decent amount of dietary fiber. In fact a recent report says that potatoes provide about 7% of the fiber in an average American diet. Since most of us don't eat

nearly as much fiber as we should, keeping potatoes in our diet could help improve our average. And since children are much more likely to eat a potato than a Brussels sprout or a rutabaga, let them have potatoes too. Just limit the chips with all the extra fat and salt!

Besides the fiber, potatoes are good sources of several minerals, including potassium. Maybe you think that bananas are good for potassium. The truth is that a medium potato has almost twice as much as a medium banana! But I agree, a boiled potato won't taste as good in a smoothie as a frozen banana does.

There's one other tidbit of new information that might influence your holiday menu planning. We usually eat more soft, smooth, creamy food than we do foods that we have to chew. If we are offered mashed potatoes at one meal, and scalloped potatoes at another, most of us will eat more mashed potatoes, and more of the rest of the meal, than we will the scalloped potatoes. So if you're trying to avoid the extra 5 pounds of holiday weight, don't serve or eat mashed potatoes. Try scalloped, or better yet roasted or baked potatoes. The more we have to chew on them, the faster we will feel full, and the less we will eat.

Here's a way to perk up baked potatoes and turn them into the whole meal. Use skim milk and reduced fat cheese to keep the calorie count lower. And if you don't care for crab, I've made this with tuna too, and it's just as good. Enjoy!

Crabbed Potatoes

4 baking potatoes	½ cup milk
⅓ cup margarine or butter	1 tsp salt
⅛ tsp cayenne pepper	1 cup (4 oz) shredded Cheddar cheese
1 can (6 oz) crab meat, or imitation crab	4 tsp grated onion
½ tsp paprika	

Bake or microwave potatoes until tender. Cool slightly. Preheat oven to 400° F. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out pulp. Leave enough pulp that skins hold their shape. Combine the removed pulp, milk, margarine, salt and pepper in large bowl and mix until blended. Drain and flake the crab or chop the imitation crab. Fold cheese, crab and onion into potato mixture. Divide evenly among potato skins. Sprinkle with paprika. Arrange in 9x13 inch baking dish and bake 15 minutes until light brown. Serves 8.

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