



Tanya Davis
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
County Extension Agent – Family and Community Health
206 S. State Street, Suite A
Decatur, Texas 76234
Ph: 940.627.3341 Fax: 940.627.8070

Wise Notes for Consumers

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Sweet Potatoes

At my mother's Thanksgiving dinner next week one of my contributions will be a wonderful dish combination of roasted sweet potatoes and green beans. This varies from my traditional Sweet Potato Casserole but it makes for a healthier yet tasty choice. Sweet Potatoes are in prime season from October to January. This Native American plant that was the main source of nourishment for early homesteaders and for soldiers during the Revolutionary War. These tuberous roots are among the most nutritious foods in the vegetable kingdom. They are packed with calcium, potassium, and vitamins A and C. This is why one colonial physician called them the "vegetable indispensable."

When selecting sweet potatoes, choose firm, dark, smooth sweet potatoes without wrinkles, bruises, sprouts, or decay. Even if cut away, a decayed spot may have already caused the whole potato to take on an unpleasant flavor.

Sweet potatoes spoil rapidly. To keep them fresh, store them in a dry, cool (55-60 degree) place such as pantry or garage. Do not store them in the refrigerator, where they will develop a hard core and an "off" taste. If stored properly, sweet potatoes will keep for a month or longer. Do not wash them until you are ready to cook them. It is the moisture from washing that will increase their spoilage.

Cook them whole whenever possible as most of the nutrients are next to the skin, and skins are easier to remove after they have been cooked. Pierce skin with fork. Place potatoes in a pan and cook in an oven heated to 375 degrees F for about 45 minutes or until tender. Cool potatoes slightly before removing skins. Sweet potatoes can be cooked in a microwave oven to save time. Wash and pierce potatoes, then place them on a paper towel. The cooking time for 2 medium potatoes is on high for 5-9 minutes.

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Following is the recipe from our Texas A&M AgriLife Dinner Tonight program for “Roasted Cowboy Potatoes and Green Beans”. This dish is simple and easy, yet very tasty.

Cowboy Roasted Potatoes and Green Beans

Vegetable-oil cooking spray
4 sweet potatoes
1 lb. fresh green beans
2 Tbsp. olive oil
½ tsp. black pepper
¼ tsp. salt
½ tsp. smoked paprika
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

Wash your hands and clean your cooking area. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray 2 baking sheets with cooking spray. Dice sweet potatoes into cubes; trim and wash the green beans. Place diced sweet potatoes and green beans in a large bowl and coat with olive oil. Season with black pepper, salt, paprika, and cayenne. Place the vegetables in a single layer on the baking sheets. Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from oven, toss with a spatula, and bake an additional 20-25 minutes, until browned and roasted. Serve warm.

Makes 8 servings.

Nutrients per serving:

Calories: 100; sodium: 110 milligrams; carbohydrate: 17 grams; dietary fiber: 4 grams; protein: 2 grams; fat: 3.5 grams.

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