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Potatoes stored best in darkness

Potato, papa, kartoffel, or whatever you call it, a potato is a potato. They can be used as a hair conditioner, for a therapeutic compress, a skin whitener and a wrinkle remover. We make crafts out of them, play games with them, but best of all, we eat them.

Why pick a potato? Potatoes are one of the most economical sources of Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, magnesium, folacin, copper and iron, plus other trace elements. They are also an inexpensive supplementary source of protein and some extra fiber. A potato is what is considered a nutrient-dense food, good nutritional return for the calories.

A medium-size potato (without a topping of butter) has only about 100 calories. There is much more to a potato in the diet than just starch. Besides the starch (complex carbohydrate) is important in the diet, for energy.

Buy potatoes that are firm and smooth, not wrinkled, wilted or having soft areas. Two large, three medium or four small potatoes equal about one pound. One pound of potatoes equals three cups peeled and sliced, 2 1/2 cups peeled and diced or two cups mashed or two cups french fries. Two pounds of medium potatoes equal about six servings of potato salad.

POTATOES ARE allergic to light; it makes them turn green and sprout. The green pigmentation found on the skins of potatoes is a compound called solanine. Fare away the green before cooking. Sprouting potatoes can be used; however, they will not be top quality.

Store potatoes in a cool, humid, but not wet, dark place that's well ventilated. Ideally 45-50 degrees. Don't refrigerate potatoes. Below 40 degrees F, potatoes will develop a sweet taste, the result of the sugars. The increased sugar will cause the potato to darken when cooked.

Don't drown the potatoes when cooking. Cook potatoes in a heavy saucepan with a tight-fitting lid in about one inch of water. Leaving the skins or cooking whole will help preserve the nutrients. Prolonged soaking in cold water is not recommended as it can result in some vitamin leaching or boil potatoes in a microwave. Check the book, but generally it takes four minutes for a medium potato. More than one potato, additional time needs to be added. Turn the potato over halfway through the baking. The potato will still cook after removing from the oven so allow it to stand for five minutes.

To boil potatoes in the microwave, the process is similar to stove-top cooking. Pieces should be uniform in size and placed only a single layer in the dish. It will take about 10 minutes for two potatoes using this method.

VERSATILITY IS the word for potatoes and perfect for the busy cook. Frozen and processed potato

Baked pasta is winner

AP — Teens invited to a test kitchen for a microwave cooking session liked this recipe best and wanted to make at home. The timings are for ovens with fewer than 600 watts. Check on the back of your oven or in your owner's manual for the wattage.

HOT 'N' HEARTY PASTA BAKE
1 1/2 cups cooked macaroni
1 pound bulk Italian sausage
One 15 1/2-ounce jar meatless spaghetti sauce
2 tablespoons water
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Cook macaroni according to package directions; drain. Crumble sausage into a 1 1/2-quart microwave-safe casserole. Cook in a low-wattage microwave oven, covered, on 100 percent power (high) 7 to 8 minutes or until no longer pink, stirring once. Drain. Stir in sauce, water and pepper. Stir in macaroni. Cook, covered, on high 4 minutes or until heated through, stirring once. Sprinkle with cheese. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 460 cal., 31 g. pro., 53 g. carb., 16 g. fat, 44 mg. chol., 1293 mg. sodium. U.S. RDA: 51 percent thiamine, 18 percent riboflavin, 36 percent niacin, 11 percent calcium, 17 percent iron, 19 percent phosphorus.

Slow down, enjoy your food

Spring is the perfect time to rid ourselves of bad habits. This is our second-chance new year, so let's celebrate the awakening of spring by putting a fast stop to fast eating.

Why should we stop our race-against-the-clock meals? A very good reason is you may be eating too much. Think about this the next time you inhale your dinner in one breath — it takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to signal your brain that you are full. No matter how much you eat in that 20 minutes (two helpings of spaghetti or 10 pancakes) you won't feel full until about 20 minutes have past. And then you may feel like you've swallowed a lead balloon.

So relax and enjoy. If you stretch your meal over a longer period of time, you will need less food to satisfy your hunger.

Slower eating offers us an excellent tool for taking control of our eating habits and helps our diets too. There are many ways to extend meal time without adding to your normal intake of food. (By the way, you'll find yourself enjoying the food you eat more when you slow down, in addition to eating less of it.)

Her are some sure-fire ways to slow down "speed eating."

GIVE YOUR EYES something to look at besides the food. Pretend your table is in an elegant restaurant. A vase of fragrant spring flowers, candles, a crisp linen tablecloth and your best china will set the scene for a relaxing meal. (The kind you can linger over.)

Wrap your silverware in a napkin and wait three minutes before starting to eat.

The delayed start can be aided by use of your watch or a clock. Notice the time when you sit down at the

table. If you are eating alone, sip a glass of sparkling water or listen to some soft background music. Remember, it's just three minutes. If you are with others, some pleasant conversation will help.

Each time you put food in your mouth, set your fork or spoon down on the plate and wait until the food has been completely swallowed.

If you are ready for dessert in less than 20 minutes after you begin eating, wait about 10 minutes before starting dessert.

The delay before dessert is very important. Often, we rush through our meals and arrive at dessert after having eaten a great deal of food in just a few minutes. When this happens, we are also likely to eat a great deal of dessert.

Now that you can relax and enjoy a delicious meal, I'd like to "spring" a refreshing light recipe on you.

You can complement the main dish below with boiled new potatoes, a crisp green salad, and fresh sliced strawberries mixed with plain yogurt for dessert.

LAMB STEAKS WITH CREAMY MINT SAUCE

2 lamb steaks (5 ounces each)
1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper
1/2 cup cream cheese, softened
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon water
1 small garlic clove, minced
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint

Sprinkle both sides of each lamb steak evenly with salt and pepper; set on rack in broiling pan and broil 6 inches from heat source until rare, 3 to 4 minutes on each side (timing will depend on thickness of lamb steaks).

Lite success Florine Mark

White lamb is broiling. In small mixing bowl, using electric mixer at medium speed, beat together cream cheese, lemon juice, water and garlic until mixture is fluffy; stir in mint. Spread 1 side of each lamb steak with half the cream cheese mixture and broil until mixture is

heated through and lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes.

Makes 2 servings, 1 lamb steak each. Per serving: 278 calories; 25 g. protein; 18 g. fat; 2 g. carbohydrate; 41 mg. calcium; 281 mg. sodium; 116 mg. cholesterol.

Progressive dinner needs hostesses, hosts

Hostesses (singles or couples) are being sought for the Livonia Historical Society's third annual Progressive Dinner 6-11 p.m. Saturday, April 9.

Needed are hostesses in homes where at least eight people may be served. After the hors d'oeuvres, the next course is fresh fruit and salad. The main course is roast turkey with trimmings, which will be the same at all homes.

Since the hostess may want to buy a larger turkey for another family meal, each "united" hostess is being refunded \$8. Menus for the salad and trimmings, along with serving suggestions, will be printed for each hostess.

All hosts and hostesses are being encouraged to participate in the rest of the progressive dinner. Tickets

will be available to them for \$12.50 each. Tickets for the general public will be \$25 per person.

For information about serving as a hostess call 477-7375 or 422-7036. For reservations, send a check by Friday, April 22, to: Livonia Historical Society, 15715 Southampton Road, Livonia 48154. Make the check payable to the society.

Hors d'oeuvres will be served at 6 p.m. at American House, 14265 Middlebelt, Livonia. Soup and salad will be served 7-8 p.m., entree 8:15-9:30 p.m. Both these courses will be served in private homes. Dessert, 9:45-11 p.m., will be served at American House.

All proceeds will benefit the Alexander Blue House Restoration at Greenmead.

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