

Potatoes, Adirondack-style

When we moved to the Tri-Lakes thirty years ago, there were many farms in the area. Donnelly's collected milk from local dairy farmers. The Youngs, Leavits and Tuckers all farmed potatoes in Gabriels. Young was the first to go out of business; Leavit followed, and now only the Tucker brothers grow potatoes in Gabriels. Tucker Taters are known throughout our region.

There are other potato farms nearby, in Vermontville and Malone. That is because our cool climate, abundant rainfall, dry sandy soil, pure mountain air and relative isolation are ideal for growing vigorous, top quality potatoes. The cool weather of our mountain plateaus helps to keep pests and diseases at bay. This is why Cornell University's Uihlein Farm, a leading developer of disease-free seed stock and New York State's official seed potato farm, is located just

North Country Kitchen

By Yvona Fast



outside Lake Placid in the shadow of the High Peaks.

Steve and Tom Tucker grow eight kinds of potatoes and supply vegetables for six local resorts. Pick-your-own strawberries each spring and the Corn Maze every fall bring many families to the old farm. Their great-uncle, Benjamin Herbert, began farming here in the 1860s, supplying vegetables for wilderness guides and their guests at the famous Paul Smith's Hotel.

Potatoes are an inexpensive, natural source of carbohydrates, protein, vitamins (niacin, several B vitamins, vitamin C) and minerals (potassium, calcium, phosphorus, sulfur, chlorine, magnesium and iron). A high-energy food, they have gotten a bad rap among dieters because of their high glycemic index. The average potato (5.3 ounces) contains 100 calories, no fat, 25 grams of carbohydrates, fiber and all but one of the essential amino acids. One potato has double the potassium of a banana.

The potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) is a common plant native to the Andes Mountains of South America, where it was cultivated 7,000 years ago. Today, there are more than 4,000 varieties grown in temperate regions where the potato is a food staple. Its wide acceptance into European kitchens is due to the potato's versatility and adaptability. Potatoes can be used in many ways, produce higher yields than grains, and can grow in climates and soils not suited to grains like wheat. With 50 billion acres planted each year, the potato is the fourth most important food crop in the world (after rice, wheat and maize).

Because potatoes can be stored through the winter, they're available all year — and they're inexpensive and

versatile. Strict light, temperature and humidity controls (38 degrees F with a 90 to 95 percent relative humidity) keep the tubers dormant.

Historically, root cellars had the dark, cool, moist conditions to store potatoes for winter use.

Potato varieties differ in starch and water content. When cooking, choose starchy potatoes with a low water content and drier texture for baking, mashing, frying and casseroles. These baking potatoes, like Russet or Yukon Gold, have a dry, mealy texture that becomes light and fluffy when cooked.

Waxy or boiling varieties have more moisture and sugar, and less starch. They don't absorb much liquid while cooking, so they hold their shape and are better for boiling, cooking in soups or stews, roasting and making potato salads or hash browns. Waxy potatoes include many red-skinned varieties like Red Norland. By slicing through a raw potato with a large knife, you can determine the starchiness: if a lot of white residue clings to the blade, the potato is starchy.

There are many specialty potatoes with odd colors and shapes. Fingerlings are specialty varieties named for their finger-like shape. The color indicates the amount of antioxidants like carotenoids (yellow flesh) or anthocyanins (pink or blue flesh). Adirondack Red and Adirondack Blue are examples of specialty potatoes. They are best enjoyed with mild seasonings to appreciate their subtle flavors.

At Tucker's, the Adirondack Blue, with a moist texture and superb flavor, is a favorite at farmer's market taste tests. The All Blue is a top-rated baking potato. The pink-fleshed Adirondack Red is good boiled, mashed or microwaved and great for home fries and salads. The Norland Dark Red is a red-skinned, white-fleshed potato with a moist, waxy texture.

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Fast, Yvona, "Potatoes, Adirondack style," *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* (Saranac Lake, NY), *Weekender* supplement, dated 22-28 February '08, pp. 10-11.

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Potatoes, Adirondack-style



Tri-color home fries

(Continued from previous page)

They are good boiled or roasted and are great for potato salads. The Yukon Gold is a good baker with robust flavor. It retains its creamy color when cooked. Reba is a light-skinned, white-fleshed boiling variety. The Hampton and Superior are two good general purpose, white-fleshed potatoes.

Potato Loaf

Ingredients:

- 1 strip bacon, cut up
- 2 onions
- 1 green pepper
- 3/4 pound kielbasa (Polish sausage)
- 6-8 medium potatoes
- 3 eggs
- 1 - 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 cup flour

Directions:

In skillet, cook bacon to render fat. While bacon renders, peel and dice onions; wash, seed and dice the pepper. Add onions, pepper and kielbasa sausage and cook on medium-low about 10 minutes, until onions are translucent and bacon is crisp.

While this is cooking, peel potatoes (if desired) and grate in food processor to a fine pulp. Place in bowl and beat in salt, eggs and flour. Stir in contents of skillet.

Turn mixture into loaf or 9 x 9 inch pan. Bake about 1 hour at 350.

Tri-Color Home Fries

Ingredients:

- 1 Tablespoon butter (or 2 slices bacon)
- 6 potatoes (I used 2 Adirondack Blue, 2 Norland Dark Red and 2 Hampton)
- 2 onions
- 1 green pepper (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 slices ham (optional)
- 1/2 cup fresh minced parsley (or 1 Tablespoon paprika)

Directions:

Melt butter in skillet (or render fat from bacon, and set

aside crisp bacon). Scrub potatoes and slice about 1/8 inch thick. Sprinkle with salt. Cover and cook on low or medium low about 5 minutes. In the meantime, peel and dice the onions; stir in. Continue cooking, covered, 5 more minutes. Wash, seed and dice the pepper. Stir in and continue cooking until potatoes are soft when pierced with a fork. Add ham and parsley and cook 1 to 2 minutes to heat through. Serve with eggs for a hearty breakfast or brunch.

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