

## The Potato

The humble potato is a staple of our New England cold-weather diet. Mashed and scalloped, added to soups and stews, roasted and fried, this familiar winter vegetable is part of our food culture. Our local farmers grow a huge variety of these tubers, many more than found in the supermarket. Planted in late spring and harvested in fall, potatoes are stored throughout the winter to grace our tables all season long.

Potatoes can be blue, red, white, or yellow. They can be small and round, or banana shaped. In addition to the potatoes many appearance and flavor variations, they also differ in starch content. The different starchiness contributes to texture variations. Some recipes call for waxy, creamy, moist, or dry. When purchasing potatoes from your local farmer, be sure to inquire about it's variety and it's best use.

As a general guideline, drier potatoes are good for mashing. Waxy potatoes are good for boiling. Moister potatoes are a good choice for scalloping and gratins. Creamy potatoes are great for soups.

When purchasing potatoes, select firm and unwrinkled vegetables of any size. Store them wrapped in a plastic bag in your fridge or root cellar (about 40 degrees F is best).

Potatoes are high in dietary fiber and vitamin C, and contain protein, iron, and calcium.

Though Irish cooking is often associated with the potato, the Incas had cultivated them thousands of years before Europeans, who avoided them because they are a member of the nightshade family (and are related to several poisonous plants). In Peru, hundreds of varieties are cultivated and prepared, including dehydration for long term storage.

This season, try a new recipe with this familiar winter vegetable.



***Recipes and information from  
Seacoast Eat Local  
([www.seacoateatlocal.org](http://www.seacoateatlocal.org))  
made possible by a grant from  
Sustainable Agriculture Re-  
search and Education  
([www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org)).***

## Irish Champ

6 large mealy baking potatoes, cut in chunks  
3 leeks, or 6 scallions, or a handful of chives, cleaned and chopped  
2 cups whole milk  
Salt and pepper  
6 tablespoons butter

1. Boil potatoes in salted water till tender, then drain.
2. In a small saucepan, simmer milk and add leeks till tender (10 minutes or less). Strain out leeks and keep milk warm.
3. In a large bowl, mash potatoes with leeks. Mash in enough milk to moisten the potatoes without making it soupy.
4. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in bowls, make a well in the center and add butter.

*Adapted from Anne Mendelson, "Milk."*

## Potato Biscuits

1 pound of potatoes  
1 cup of all purpose flour  
2 tablespoons of olive oil  
2 tablespoons of a mixture of dried green herbs (chives, dill, oregano, etc)  
Salt and pepper

1. Boil potatoes in salted water until tender, drain, and mash.
2. Add flour, olive oil, herbs, salt and pepper and stir to a soft dough.
3. Roll out on a well floured surface to 1/2 inch thickness. Cut out rounds with a cookie cutter or drinking glass.
4. Cook biscuits on a hot pan, about 5 minutes on each side. Serve with local butter.

## Potato ideas...

Mashed with cream and roasted garlic

Roasted with olive oil, rosemary, and sea salt

Pureed with leeks for soup

Cold potato salad with a classic mayonnaise dressing

Warm potato salad with aioli, crumbled bacon, and capers

Baked and stuffed with cheddar, a dash of maple syrup, and chipotle pepper

Par-boil small potatoes, drain, press flat to break open slightly, then finish by roasting

Grated for a morning hash with eggs