

# The Power of Extension

Columns from the staff of  
North Carolina Cooperative Extension  
Robeson County Center

## IT'S TIME FOR S-W-E-E-E-T TATERS!

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Whether called sweet potato or yam, the sweet potato we know is a sweet, delicious, nutritious, and edible root from the morning-glory family. One medium sweet potato counts as 1 cup of the 4 - 5 cups of the daily-recommended vegetable group, has more than a day's worth of vitamin A, 35 percent of the recommended daily amount (RDA) for vitamin C, and 15 percent of the RDA for fiber.

Native Americans were growing sweet potatoes in the Americas even before Columbus arrived in 1492. Today, North Carolina is the number one producer of sweet potatoes. They are available year-round and are usually harvested in North Carolina from August to November. After a curing process that sweetens the sweet potato, it is ready for the market and your dinner table.

When shopping for fresh sweet potatoes, look for ones that are plump, medium-sized, and tapered towards the ends. They should be firm, dry, and brightly colored with smooth skins. Avoid sweet potatoes with any sign of decay. Any deterioration will spread rapidly affecting the taste of the whole potato.

Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dark, dry place like a closet in which the temperature is 55°F - 60°F. The refrigerator is not an option, as temperatures below 50 degrees will cause them to turn black and lose flavor. It's best to purchase sweet potatoes in small quantities and use them quickly.

The sweet potato is a versatile vegetable. It can be baked, boiled, roasted, candied, or even grilled. It can be used in biscuits, breads, muffins, pies, custards, cookies, and cakes. Do select a preparation method that limits fat and sugar if you're watching your waistline or your health.

Add sweet potatoes to your grocery list this week or better yet, check out the availability from a local farmer. Then try these healthy recipes.

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### **Pear Yam Salad**

This recipe is a fall favorite. The slightly sweet spicy dressing mixed with the toasted pecan flavor makes the yams and pears perfect partners.

2 lbs. sweet potatoes (yams), peeled and cubed	1/3 cup raisins
3 fresh pears	1/3 cup light mayonnaise
2 tbsp. lemon juice	1 tbsp. honey
1/4 cup toasted pecans	1/2 tsp. ground ginger
1 cup chopped celery	Salt to taste

In a saucepan, cook yams 8 to 10 minutes in boiling water just until tender. Do not overcook. Drain and set aside to cool. Core pears and cut into chunks. Toss pears with lemon juice and mix with the cooled yams in a large bowl. Add pecans, celery and raisins, mixing gently. In a small bowl, mix together mayonnaise, honey, ginger, and salt. Pour the dressing over the yam-pear mixture, mixing gently to coat the salad. Serve immediately or refrigerate. Makes 8 servings. Source: Guilford County Cooperative Extension

### **Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges**

2 (8-oz.) sweet potatoes, peeled	1/8 tsp. ground cloves
1 tbsp. olive oil	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. curry powder	1/4 tsp. pepper
1/4 tsp. ground cumin	

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut sweet potatoes in half lengthwise. Cut each half into six wedges. Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Toss gently to coat. Place wedges on a baking sheet so they do not overlap. Bake at 425 degrees until very tender. Serves 4. Source: Cook Smart-Eat Smart

For other ideas or information, please contact Janice Fields, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at 671-3276, by E-mail at [Janice\\_Fields@ncsu.edu](mailto:Janice_Fields@ncsu.edu) or visit our website at <http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu>.