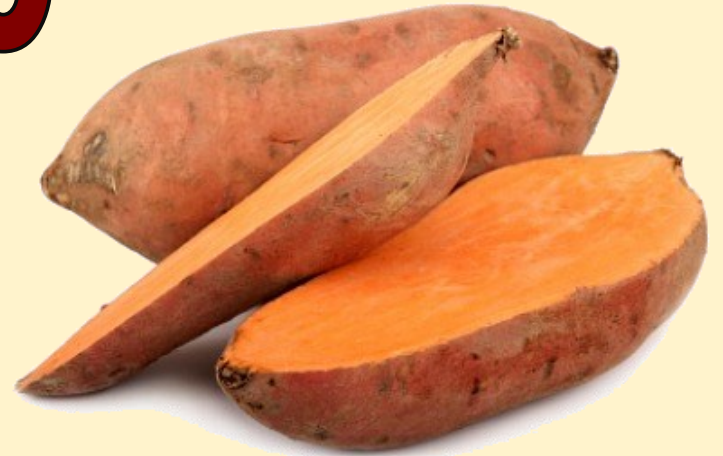


Sweet Potato

Sweet potatoes are native to Central and South America and are one of the oldest vegetables known to man. Christopher Columbus brought sweet potatoes to Europe after his first voyage to the New World in 1492. The Sweet potato, *Ipomoea batatas*, is a tender, warm-weather vegetable that requires a long frost-free growing season to mature large, useful roots. Sweet potato is native to Central and South America. Its large, starchy, sweet-tasting, tuberous roots are a root vegetable. Sweet potatoes can be grouped into two different categories depending upon the texture they have when cooked: some are firm, dry, and mealy, while others are soft and moist. In both types, the taste is starchy and sweet with different varieties having different unique tastes. The sweet potato is only distantly related to the potato. Sweet potatoes can be found in your local markets year-round, however they are in season in November and December.



There are a surprising number of nutrient categories responsible for the health benefits. Among these categories are antioxidants, anti-inflammatory nutrients, and blood sugar-regulating nutrients. Each category brings with it valuable health benefits. They are also a very good source of vitamin C, manganese, copper, pantothenic acid, and vitamin B6. Additionally, they are a good source of potassium, dietary fiber, niacin, vitamin B1, vitamin B2, and phosphorus. Several recent studies have shown the superior ability of sweet potatoes to raise our blood levels of vitamin A. This benefit may be particularly true for children since vitamin A helps your eyes adjust to light changes when you come in from outside and also helps keep your eyes, skin and mucous membranes moist. It also has antioxidant properties that neutralize free radicals in the body that cause tissue and cellular damage.