

Indigenous Food Hubs

2026 Harvest of the Month



AUGUST: POTATOES

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In the North American Southwest, Native peoples have gathered, traded, and tended a wild potato for more than 10,000 years, making it one of the region's oldest known foods, older even than corn, beans, and squash. It served as food, medicine, and a ceremonial plant. This historic potato is known as the Four Corners potato (*Solanum jamesii*).

TRIBAL FOODWAYS

- Tribes with a long history of caring for the Four Corners potato include the Pueblo (Hopi, Zuni, Tewa, and Zia), Diné (Navajo), Southern Paiute, and Apache.
- Traditionally, women gathered and processed the tubers.
- Diné (Navajo) simmer tubers with a mineral "potato clay" (glésh) to soften their naturally bitter taste.
- Tribal farmers are reviving and replanting the Four Corners potato in their gardens and communities.

ACROSS THE WEST

Escalante, Utah, was nicknamed "Potato Valley" by settlers for its wild potato fields. Tubers were traded across cultural landscapes, from Escalante and Bears Ears to Mesa Verde, Chaco Canyon, and into New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas.

NUTRITION AND FUN FACTS

- A potato is not a root — it is a tuber, a swollen underground stem where the plant stores energy.
- Potatoes grow "eyes," which are buds that can sprout into whole new plants.
- The Americas hold thousands of potato varieties in colors from purple and red to blue and gold.
- One "mother" Four Corners tuber can grow up to 600 tiny potatoes in a season. Its tubers can rest underground and sprout again years later.
- The Four Corners potato has twice as much iron, calcium, magnesium, and protein as a modern red potato.
- The potato is the 4th most important crop on earth after wheat, rice, and corn.
- Nutrition tip: Keep the skin on — fiber and potassium sit in or just under it. Potatoes are naturally fat- and cholesterol-free.
- A whole medium potato is approximately 120 calories and has 3g of protein, 26g of carbs, 3g of fiber, 26% of daily vitamin B6, and 33% of daily vitamin C.



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RECIPE FOR HERB-ROASTED POTATOES



COOK TIME

35-40 Minutes



SERVINGS

4 to 6

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs potatoes (any kind), scrubbed — skins on
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary or thyme
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (optional)
- Fresh parsley or green onion, to serve (optional)



DIFFICULTY:

☒ EASY ☐ MEDIUM ☐ HARD

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment or lightly oil it.
2. Scrub the potatoes and cut into 1-inch chunks. Leave the skins on for extra fiber and nutrients.
3. In a large bowl, toss the potatoes with olive oil, salt, pepper, herbs, and garlic until evenly coated.
4. Spread in a single layer on the baking sheet, cut sides down.
5. Roast for 20 minutes, then flip the pieces with a spatula.
6. Roast for another 15-20 minutes, until golden and crispy on the outside and tender on the inside (a fork slides in easily).
7. Sprinkle with fresh parsley or green onion and serve warm.

COOKING TIPS

- Campfire version: Wrap seasoned potato chunks in foil packets and cook on medium coals for 25-30 minutes, turning once — echoing the old way many Indigenous peoples roasted tubers.
- Keep the skins on for higher fiber and potassium.
- Safety tip: Do not eat potatoes that have turned green or sprouted; cut off those parts. Store them in a cool, dark place to prevent greening and sprouting.
- For extra-crispy potatoes, don't crowd the pan.

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