

Seasonal Eating
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Celebrate Sweet Potato Month
February 2011

The new 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were just released at the end of January and one of the recommendations is to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables. A great choice for February is sweet potatoes since they are warm and filling for cold days. In fact, February is Sweet Potato month and this is a great time to learn that sweet potatoes don't always have to have marshmallows on top.

These beautiful tubers can be used in salads, side dishes and desserts. Roasting, boiling and steaming are the most common methods of cooking depending on the end use. Try cutting peeled potatoes into one inch cubes, tossing with olive oil, salt and pepper and roasting on a sheet pan at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes or until tender, turning once. For pureed potatoes you will want to boil them. You can peel them before or after boiling, but it's easier after cooking.



Sweet potatoes can go sweet or savory. We, as southerners, are probably most familiar with the sweet as in Sweet Potato Casseroles and Sweet Potato Pie. But sweet potatoes are also a great accompaniment to pork. In this Jerk Pork Roast with Sweet Potatoes recipe, the sweet potatoes cook with a jerk seasoned pork sirloin or pork butt roast in orange juice and chicken broth with onions and garlic for a delicious flavor combination. Thicken the juices up with cornstarch to pour over the meat and potatoes and you have a trip to Jamaica on your plate.

There are two types of sweet potatoes. One has a dark orange flesh and is moist and sweeter. The other is more pale yellow-fleshed and is drier and less sweet, more like a baking potato. Most often we use the dark fleshed potatoes (which are often referred to as yams in the United States but are actually a different plant than a yam).

When storing your sweet potatoes, do not put them in the refrigerator as they will become hard in the center. Instead, store them in a cool, dry place at about 55 degrees for up to a month or use within a few days if at room temperature. The flesh will turn dark when exposed to air so cut them up just before using or else submerge them in water until ready to use. A carbon bladed knife will also discolor a sweet potato so use a stainless steel blade.

If you are trying to eat healthier this year, sweet potatoes fit the bill with a medium potato providing 120% of the daily value for Vitamin A, 30 % of Vitamin C and 16% of fiber. It is also high in beta carotene, an antioxidant which may help in reducing the risk of heart disease and cancer.

To learn more about sweet potatoes and potatoes, the University of Tennessee Extension will be having a Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on Wednesday, February 16 from 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. at the Extension office. The cost is \$5.00 and includes the demonstration, samples and a recipe booklet. Call the office at 684-5971 for more information or to register by Monday.

Jerk Pork Roast with Sweet Potatoes

- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 3 teaspoons dried thyme
- 3 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 teaspoons Tabasco sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 3-4 pound boneless pork roast (pork sirloin or Boston butt)
- 3 large cloves garlic, divided
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 large onion, sliced
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 inch chunks
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch mixed with a little cold water

In a large zip top plastic bag, combine the vinegar, sugar, allspice, cloves, thyme, basil, Tabasco sauce, salt and pepper. Mix together and add the pork roast. Massage marinade into meat a little and place bag in a pan. Place in refrigerator for a couple of hours or overnight.

Cut 1 clove of garlic into about 8 slivers. Remove roast from marinade and place in a roasting pan. Discard marinade. With a paring knife cut slits all over the roast and insert the slivers of garlic. Pour the orange juice and chicken broth into the pan with the roast and add the onion and smashed remaining 2 cloves of garlic. Cover the pan with foil and roast at 325 degrees for 1 1/2 hours. Add potatoes to the pan and coat with juices. Roast for another hour or so or until pork and potatoes are tender.

Drain the juices into a saucepan and heat to boiling. Whisk in the cornstarch mixture to thicken. Slice or shred pork and cover with thickened juices. Serve with potatoes on the side.