

# Worth their weight in gold

*Yukon Gold potatoes, developed 50 years ago at the University of Guelph, are popular because they're tasty, healthy and versatile*

BY CHARMIAN CHRISTIE

The Yukon Gold potato marks its 50th anniversary this year. The hybrid was developed at the University of Guelph by Gary Johnston and Geoff Rowberry. Despite being around for half a century and facing competition from literally thousands of varieties, Guelph's own homegrown, yellow-fleshed, thin-skinned potato is still one of the bestselling spuds on the market in North America.

## What's not to love?

While nutritionists will applaud its high vitamin C and potassium levels, cooks love its versatility. Thanks to its medium-starch content, this yellow potato is the ultimate multi-tasker. It bakes beautifully like a starchy russet, yet retains its shape when boiled like its low-starch, waxy counterparts. It can be mashed, smashed, steamed, grilled, fried or grated. Yukon Golds shine in latkes, soups, shepherd's pie and any other dish that calls for potatoes.

## Can I eat this?

What if your Yukon Gold is banker's green? It's not unripe, it's been overexposed to sunlight. If the overexposure is mild, you can easily peel away the green portion and cook the potato without worry. However, if the green goes deep, not only will the potato taste bitter, eating it could give you a



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stomach ache — provided you are persistent enough to choke it down.

## The Eyes Don't Always Have It

Don't automatically toss a sprouted potato — one with "eyes." If the potato is still firm, you can safely remove the sprouts with a knife and cook the potato. However, if the eyes are peeking out of a wrinkled, withered spud, send it to the compost heap, not the cooking pot.

## Storage

Potatoes like it cool, dry and dark. To ensure your potatoes last as long as possible, keep them away from the following things:

- **Water:** Put potatoes away unwashed. If your potatoes are dirty, scrub them just before you cook them. Washing potatoes before storing them will encourage spoilage.
- **Refrigerator:** Temperatures lower than 4 C (40 F) will turn the potatoes' natural starch to sugar. This will cause discoloration during cooking and alter the flavour.
- **Onions:** Potatoes and onions play well together in the pan, but not in storage. Since these two crops release gases that

encourage each other to break down, keep them separated until you're ready to cook.

- **Tupperware:** Sealed containers are perfect for cooked potatoes, but raw spuds need to breathe or they can develop mould.
  - **Heat:** The refrigerator is too cold, but cupboards under your sink or beside large appliances will be too warm, making the potatoes spoil quickly.
  - **Countertops:** It might seem convenient, but leaving potatoes in easy reach might turn into extra trips to the grocery store. Sunlight will turn potatoes green and can encourage the production of a toxin called solanine.
- So just how and where should you keep potatoes? The best storage is in a paper or perforated plastic bag in an unheated basement, airy drawer, closet or root cellar.

## Prep

Yukon Golds have relatively thin skins, so there is no need to peel them. Not only does the skin contain most of the vitamins, it also contains the fibre. In addition to increased nutrition, a few flecks of skin in your mashed potatoes will prove they are homemade. Just before cooking, simply rinse the potatoes under cool water and use a vegetable brush to remove any dirt. There's no need for soap or aggressive scrubbing.

So, what are you waiting for? Here are a couple of recipes to get you started.





### CRISPY ROASTED LEMON & GARLIC YUKON GOLD WEDGES

These lemony potato wedges are an ideal accompaniment to chicken or lamb. They're crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. Boiling the potatoes before baking them makes for a lighter, fluffier interior, but if this extra step is asking too much, simply toss the uncooked potato wedges in the oil mixture and add an extra 15 to 20 minutes baking time before increasing the oven temperature.

#### Ingredients

- 4 medium** Yukon Gold potatoes, washed but with skins left on
- 3 tablespoons** olive oil
- 2 tablespoons** melted salted butter
- 1 lemon**, zest and juice
- 3 cloves** garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon** dried oregano
- fresh ground** black pepper

#### Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a rimmed baking pan with parchment. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to boil over high heat.

Cut each potato into eight wedges. Gently place the wedges into the boiling water with a slotted spoon, being careful not to splash. Boil the potatoes for 15 minutes. Remove the potato wedges with the slotted spoon, allowing the excess water to drip off. Place the drained wedges in a large bowl.

While the potato wedges boil, make the dressing by whisking the oil, butter, lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic and oregano together in a small bowl. Pour the oil mixture over the drained potato wedges and toss to coat evenly.

Spread the potatoes in a single layer on the lined baking sheet and drizzle with any remaining oil mixture. Season lightly with pepper. Bake, stirring once or twice, for 30 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Increase oven temperature to 425 F and roast another 15 minutes or until crisp. Serve hot.

*Prep: 20 minutes*

*Cook: 45 minutes*

*Serves: Four*

### CHICKEN, SPINACH AND YUKON GOLD CURRY

Because Yukon Golds keep their shape when cooked, they can be added to soups, stews, casseroles and even curries without falling apart. In this recipe, pieces of potato and chicken swim in a not-too-spicy sauce. Don't be alarmed if the yogurt looks grainy while the chicken cooks. The splash of cream at the end will smooth things all out.

#### Ingredients

- 1/4 cup** canola or light vegetable oil, divided
- 1 medium** potato, cut into 1-centimetre (1/2-inch) cubes (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon** cumin seeds
- 2 large** onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons** finely chopped garlic
- 2 tablespoons** finely chopped ginger
- 3 tablespoons** tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon** garam masala
- 1 tablespoon** brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon** red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon** ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon** salt
- 340 grams** (12 ounces) boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3/4 cup** plain yogurt
- 1/3 cup** water
- 1/4 cup** cream
- 142 grams** (5 ounces) baby spinach (4 generous cups)
- 1/4 cup** chopped cilantro leaves, optional

#### Instructions


Place two tablespoons of oil in a non-stick skillet over medium heat, add the potato. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the potato cubes are tender but hold their shape when pierced with a fork, about eight to 10 minutes. Remove potatoes and set aside.

Add the remaining two tablespoons of oil. When the oil is hot, add the cumin seed and cook about 10 seconds before adding the onions.

Sauté until the onions are golden brown, about eight minutes. Add the garlic and ginger and cook for two minutes. Stir in the tomato paste.



Reduce the heat to low, add the garam masala, brown sugar, red pepper flakes, turmeric and salt and cook for two minutes. Stir in the chicken and cook until the chicken is almost done, about five to seven minutes. Return the potatoes to the pan. Stir in the yogurt and water and cook until the chicken is fully cooked, about five minutes. Stir in the cream. Add the spinach

in batches if it won't all fit at once, stirring until it's wilted and distributed evenly throughout the curry, about three minutes. Serve the curry hot, sprinkled with cilantro, if using. 

*Prep: 10 minutes*

*Cook time: 40 minutes*

*Serves: Four*