



# Growing with MO Harvest of the Season

A Missouri Farm to Preschool Newsletter

November

## Sweet Potatoes



### Celebrate the Harvest!

In November, we give thanks for the many foods our Earth has given us through the growing season. The early Americans were thankful that they had food to get them through the winter. They did not have supermarkets where they could buy food all year round, so they learned to grow foods that would keep well. Sweet potatoes are one of those foods. They grow underground and are dug up in the fall, just before the first frost. They are then cured by keeping in a warm, humid place for a couple weeks. Curing makes the sweet potato sweeter and it thickens the skin to protect against decay. Sweet potatoes that are wrapped in paper and stored in a cool, dark place (not the refrigerator) could last all winter! So this was an important source of nutrition for early Americans.

### Did You Know?

- Sweet potatoes are one of the oldest known vegetables. In 1492, Christopher Columbus brought sweet potatoes with him on his first voyage to the New World.
- Sweet potatoes are packed with more nutrition than white potatoes.



### Read Together

**Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes**  
by Yori Tokeda

**Feast for 10** by Cathryn Falwell

**The Gigantic Sweet Potato** by Dianne De Las Casas

### Cook Together

#### Chili Roasted Sweet Potatoes

4 lb. fresh sweet potatoes

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. chili powder

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. sugar

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. black pepper

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. white pepper

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. garlic powder

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. salt

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup vegetable oil



1. Scrub sweet potatoes thoroughly.
2. Leaving skin on, cut potatoes into wedges about 1½ inches thick.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together all seasonings and oil, making sure there are no lumps.
4. Add sweet potatoes to the bowl and toss until they are coated on all sides.
5. Place in single layer on sheet pan. Do not crowd sweet potatoes.
6. Bake at 400 degrees for 12-15 minutes or until tender and browned in spots.

Recipe from Sizzling School Lunches: Indiana Cooks with Chef Cyndie

When you see this symbol in the recipe it means it is a great opportunity for children to lend a hand in the kitchen.

## Science Corner

### Sprout a Sweet Potato in a Jar

Supplies needed:

- Quart-size glass jar
- Toothpicks
- Fresh sweet potato, unwashed (small enough to fit inside the jar)



1. Help your child push 3 or 4 toothpicks into the sweet potato. Toothpicks should be evenly spaced around the middle of the potato.
2. Put sweet potato in the jar so the toothpicks hold the top half of the sweet potato out of the jar.
3. Help your child fill the jar with enough water to almost cover the bottom half of the sweet potato.
4. Place the jar in a warm location. A sunny windowsill is a good spot.
5. Watch over the next few weeks as the potato grows roots at the bottom and leaves at the top.
6. Refill the jar with fresh water every few days.
7. It can keep growing in water or you can plant the sprouted sweet potato in potting soil.



## From the Field

### Stories from Missouri Child Care

Willow Woods Learning Center in Platte County has grown successful gardens for several years. They are lucky to have sturdy raised beds with very fertile soil. Last year in March, the children learned about sweet potatoes using lessons from the *Grow It, Try It, Like It* curriculum. Many of the kids were not big fans of eating them at that time. Then they planted and grew sweet potatoes, dug them up in the fall, scrubbed them and helped make sweet potato fries. And guess what? The children loved them!

*If they make it, they'll eat it!*



## Tips for Using Sweet Potatoes

- Roast chunks of sweet potatoes in a hot oven with other root vegetables like onions, beets and parsnips.
- Add diced sweet potatoes to your favorite stew or chili recipe.
- Make mashed sweet potatoes with a little butter and cinnamon.
- Learn to enjoy the natural flavor of sweet potatoes without a lot of added sugar.

*Growing with MO Harvest of the Season* is a project of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Team Nutrition Program. Young children learn about Missouri grown fruits and vegetables through preschool classroom experiences, gardening, field trips and through eating these foods in meals and snacks when they are in season.

[www.health.mo.gov/growingwithmo](http://www.health.mo.gov/growingwithmo)



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