

Vegetable Main Dish Recipes Vol. 4

Enjoy Potatoes

Potatoes are nutritious vegetables that can be used as staple foods and side dishes. By knowing a little trick when cooking, you can make it more delicious.

By Makiko Hei



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Potatoes Are an Excellent Source of Energy

Potatoes contain lots of vitamin C, which helps us fight off colds, recover more quickly from fatigue, and even keep our skin smooth. A potato has about the same amount of vitamin C as a serving of spinach or a mandarin orange. What's more, the vitamin C in potatoes does not break down during cooking because it is protected by starch. Potatoes are especially good for steaming, stir-frying, boiling, and deep-frying.

Potatoes are a staple food in some countries because their main component is starch (carbohydrate). They can be stored for a long time and provide a reliable source of vitamin C, which we tend to lack. In short, potatoes are an excellent source of energy and nutrition.

A wide range of potatoes is available in Japan, and there are many methods of cooking, suited to the texture and characteristics of each varieties. They are divided broadly into two groups—the soft, floury texture typified by the Danshaku and Kita Akari, and the waxy texture characterized by the May Queen.



Danshaku



May Queen

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Tips for preparation

It's OK to eat sprouted potatoes if you remove the sprouts first. But make sure to remove them completely, because the sprouts and the area around them contain a component called solanine, which can cause food poisoning.

Cut potatoes oxidize and darken on contact with air, so please rinse them in water immediately. Rinsing out some of the starch can prevent potatoes from losing their shape during cooking. So, depending on what you are cooking, it's better to soak the potatoes in water for about five minutes. This can also remove lye from the potato as well as starch. If you're using one of the varieties with a firm, waxy texture, on the other hand, start cooking them as soon as you cut them.

Start with cold water and cook slowly for a sweeter flavor

The starch in potatoes turns into sugar when they are boiled slowly, starting with cold water. Once the water comes to a boil, watch the heat to make sure they don't boil over.

In this issue, we'll show you how to make nikujaga, (beef and potatoes stewed in savory soy sauce-based dashi broth). It's a favorite home-cooked dish in Japan. When making nikujaga, we recommend a variety called Danshaku if they are available. We'll also introduce stir-fried potatoes, which are cut into fine strips, rinsed to remove some of the starch, and seasoned for a refreshing flavor.

Nikujaga (4 servings)

(beef and potatoes stewed in savory soy sauce-based dashi broth)

Cook time: 30 minutes

A classic in Japanese home cooking! You'll feel energized by this dish's blend of sweet and soy sauce flavors, and it seams perfectly with rice.

[Ingredients]

300g beef (thinly sliced)
5 medium potatoes (Danshaku)
200g onion
200g shirataki (konjac noodles)

50cc sake
50cc soy sauce
2 tablespoons sugar
200cc water



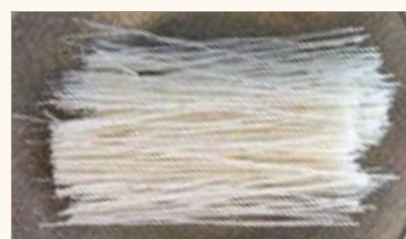
[Instructions]

1. Peel potatoes and cut into halves or quarters. Cut onion into about six wedges. Boil shirataki in water for 1-2 minutes, remove any froth that collects on the surface, and then drain.
2. Place ingredients into a heavy pan in this order: onion, potatoes, and shirataki, and then add all seasonings and water to the pan. Put the lid on the pan and place it on medium heat. When it comes to a boil, mix the ingredients, starting from the bottom of the pan, and then cover again and braise for about 15 minutes. (Turn down the heat if it is bubbling.)
3. Add beef so it steams for about 5 minutes. Then remove the lid, and boil for 10 minutes while occasionally stirring the pan from the bottom up, until lots of the broth boils off. Taste and add more sugar and soy sauce if needed.



Tips

If konjac noodles are not available, you can use a moderate quantity of harusame gelatin noodles, which have been soaked in water until tender. (Add them at the end.) However, harusame absorbs a lot of water, so you must be careful not to boil off all the broth.



Stir-fried potatoes and green peppers with cumin

(4 servings) Cook time: 10 minutes

Here's how to stir-fry potatoes for a crispy texture and there's no need to pre-cook them. The key here is don't overheat them.

[Ingredients]

3 potatoes (May Queen)

2 green peppers

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

1 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

Pepper to taste

1 teaspoon soy sauce

2 tablespoons olive oil



[Instructions]

1. Peel potatoes, slice them into 3mm width, and then shred them. Immediately soak them in water and then drain. Remove seeds and pith from green peppers and shred them into 3mm strips.
2. Put oil and cumin seeds into frying pan and place the pan on medium heat (make sure the oil does not burn!).
3. When the cumin becomes aromatic, add the potatoes and blend them thoroughly into the oil. Turn the heat to high, add vinegar and green peppers, and fry them swiftly. Season with sugar, salt, and pepper, and top with soy sauce poured with a circular motion. Taste and add more sugar or salt as needed.

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Profile

Makiko Hei

She runs a vegetable cooking school a "vege vege vege*" (Meguro, Tokyo)

HP: <https://vege3.jp/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/makichanshokudo/>

* The school teaches a careful approach to preparing of vegetables in ways to create glamorous vegetable dishes, with the motto "Love vegetables, make delicious daily meals."

