



IN PRAISE OF POTATOES

The humble tuber gets no respect among foodies. But with a little education, and a sprinkle of creativity, potatoes can be a nice piece of your next dinner dish.

By LYNNE S. GOLDMAN

Potatoes sometimes get a bad rap. Always an afterthought—“we need a starch”—it’s often a bland side dish, heaped with other stuff to make it more appetizing. Don’t get me wrong. French fries, hash browns, and baked potatoes have their place—especially when topped with sour cream and butter—but this humble root vegetable has lots more to offer.

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What we typically find in the supermarket year-round are known as storage potatoes, good for baking and mashing but not much else. Here in the River Towns, however, we are fortunate to have access to a dozen or more potato varieties, from fingerlings to waxy to russets, all grown locally and available at area farmers markets (or directly from farms).

“Potatoes come in purples and pinks and yellows in all shapes and sizes,” explains farmer Malaika Spencer, who grows potatoes on Roots to River Farm in Solebury. “Our favorites are French and Red Thumb fingerlings, which are both creamy and delicious.” At Blooming Glen Farm in Hilltown, Bucks County, Trish Borneman and her husband, Tom Murtha, grew nine potato varieties this season, including Red Gold, La Ratte, Chieftain, Satina, Caribou and Purple Sun (check out www.MainePotatoLady.com for descriptions).

Potatoes are grown by “seed,” which are just pieces or whole potatoes that have started to sprout. In the River Towns, these tubers are typically planted late April to mid-May. Delicate, thin-skinned new potatoes are harvested in late June and July. They are delicious roasted with olive oil and salt, or made into a simple

fresh potato salad. Storage potatoes, like russets and Kennebec, are harvested in late September and October. If stored between 40 and 45 degrees in a dry place, they will last all winter. Stored potatoes also need room to breathe, so an open container in a cool pantry is best. By the way, a sprouted potato is fine to eat, just as long as you remove the sprout.

A fresh dug new potato has much more flavor depth. Because a new potato has a thin skin that’s easily bruised, it doesn’t store or ship well, so you won’t find them in the grocery store. It’s another great reason to frequent your local farmers markets. You’ll be first in line when these tasty tubers appear.

Be adventurous, too. Buying local produce means access to unique varieties of vegetables, ones that are well suited to local growing conditions. “Try them all, even if they look weird!” Spencer urges. Ask the farmer for tips on how to best cook and serve the potatoes. And be prepared to hear accolades from your holiday guests. 🌊

Lynne S. Goldman is the creator of Bucks County Taste and a regular contributor to River Towns.

A ShopRite advertisement featuring a collage of holiday dishes including a turkey, green beans, mashed potatoes, and cranberry sauce. The ShopRite logo is at the top center. The main headline reads "Your Holiday Meal is Holi-DONE!". Below it, text says "Let us help make the holidays a little easier. Get everything for your holiday celebration all in one place! Our large catering options offer entree, sides, deserts and so much more. Place your order today." Further down, it says "Download the Order Express App" and "Order deli, meals to go, cakes, catering and more right from your mobile device. Available from the app store." At the bottom, there is a QR code and a list of locations: "Visit your local ShopRite store of Flemington • Greenwich • Bethlehem • Clinton • Yardley".

ShopRite

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