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PRESS RELEASE
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The diet-friendly potato.

For low-carb lifestyles, sweet potatoes are a perfect fit.

It sometimes seems like the world's gone carb-crazy. If you're following a low-carb regimen, then it's likely you're learning the lingo. Net carbs, total carbs...sugar-free, no sugar added...whole wheat, whole grain...good carbs, bad carbs—the terminology can be confusing. One thing's certain, if you're going low-carb, then potatoes are a no-go, right? Think again. **Sweet potatoes, or yams, actually fit perfectly into a low-carb lifestyle—with major nutritional bonuses to boot.**

For carb counters, you must constantly contend with a pesky detail called the glycemic index (GI). High GI foods raise your blood sugar quickly—then you crash, feel hungry, if not famished, and the eating cycle begins. Low GI foods cause a gradual rise in blood sugar and you feel satiated longer. For the carbohydrates among these foods, they've taken on the nomenclature of “good” and “bad” carbs. Asparagus—good carb. White potatoes—bad carb. But all potatoes are not created equal.

Among root vegetables, sweet potatoes offer the lowest GI rating. That's because the sweet potato digests slowly, causing a gradual rise in blood sugar. It's time to move sweet potatoes to the “good” carb list. Many of the most popular diets these days have already.

Sweet Potato Nutritional Aspects and Popular Diets

South Beach Diet

For the nearly 12 million Americans counting carbohydrates as part of the Atkins or South Beach plans, the glycemic index plays a critical part in determining acceptable foods. The index ranks how quickly the body converts carbohydrates into sugar; the lower the glycemic index in a food, the less it will cause weight gain. Sweet potatoes rank significantly lower than white potatoes in the glycemic index, which explains why both carb-counting diets encourage substituting yams for Idaho potatoes. Sweet potatoes are introduced in the later phases of these diets, but because they are nutrient-rich they are an acceptable food.

Atkins Diet

The Atkins Diet recommends introducing 10 grams of carbs in Phase 3 of the diet plan. Sweet potatoes have 10 grams of carbohydrates for every 1/4 cup. Sweet potatoes are on the safe list as a great substitute for other starches such as rice, potatoes and corn.

Sugarbusters Diet

The popular "Sugarbusters" diet that swept the nation is also a strong advocate of including sweet potatoes in a healthy diet. The Sugarbusters diet recommends sweet potatoes as a great substitute for other vegetables high in sugar and carbohydrates such as rice, pasta and corn.

One of the Sugarbusters book's authors reports that the part of a carrot that's healthy is the beta carotene necessary for visual activity and needed for the retina that's found in the pigment, not the fleshy part of the carrot that's full of sugar. You can also get the beta carotene from sweet potatoes, which are not full of sugar.

Aside from its low-carb attributes, the sweet potato packs a nutritional one-two punch. Both the US Department of Agriculture and the National Cancer Institute recommend diets providing 6 mg of beta-carotene a day, and sweet potatoes contain four times the recommended amount. Beta-carotene consumption has been linked to the increase of "helper" T-cell activity in HIV-positive individuals as well as lower instances of cancers. John Hopkins University research study linked high levels of beta-carotene with a lower incidence of lung cancer, which kills approximately 145,000 Americans every year.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) ranks food on nutritional content, including dietary fiber, complex carbs, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium—the higher the score, the more nutritious the food. CSPI ranks sweet potatoes number one—the *most nutritional* vegetable—significantly higher in nutrients than even spinach or broccoli.

Sweet Potato Nutrition Facts (for one medium size sweet potato)

Calories 130
Fat 0.39 g
Protein 2.15 g
Net Carbs 31.56 g
Dietary Fiber 3.9 g
Calcium 28.6 mg
Sodium 16.9 mg
Potassium 265.2 mg
Folate 18.2 mcg
Vitamin C 29.51 mg
Vitamin A 26081.9 IU

Source: US Department of Agriculture.

The University of California, School of Public Health backed up the John Hopkins findings on beta-carotene, adding that sweet potatoes contain high levels of vitamin C, also known for its anti-cancer effects. Vitamin C has also been associated with an increase in blood levels of “good”, or HDL cholesterol, which lowers the risk of heart disease.

Soluble fiber-rich fruits and vegetables, especially those which contain pectin, can help lower “bad”, or LDL cholesterol levels. A UC Berkeley Wellness Letter reported that consuming at least five of these foods each day can help lower cholesterol levels more effectively than a low-fat diet. Among the soluble fiber and pectin-rich foods on the UC Berkeley list was sweet potatoes.

Incorporating sweet potatoes’ “good” carbs into your diet is simple—and nutritionally smart. Additional information, resources and recipes are available at the Web site of the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission:

www.sweetpotato.org

Shrimp and Yam Soup

This is a fun, richly flavored soup with a spectrum of color and flavor to match. Claw crabmeat can also be substituted for the shrimp.

1 onion, chopped
1 bell pepper, cored and chopped (Note: For more color, add a red or yellow bell pepper.)
1 tsp. minced garlic
4 cups canned vegetable broth or chicken broth
2 cups diced, peeled sweet potatoes (yams)
1 (10 oz.) bag frozen cut green beans
1 (10 oz.) bag fresh spinach
1 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 (10 oz.) can chopped tomatoes and green chilies
1 (6 oz.) can tomato paste
1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
Salt and pepper to taste
Dash hot pepper sauce
Sliced green onions (scallions), optional

Coat a large pot with nonstick cooking spray, and set over medium heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, and garlic, and cook, stirring, until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the broth, sweet potatoes, frozen green beans, spinach, shrimp, tomatoes and green chilies, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper, and hot sauce, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, and cook until the sweet potatoes are tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Add the green onions, if desired, and add more broth if soup is too thick. Makes 12 servings.

Per serving: CAL 94 (8% from fat); FAT 1g; SATURATED FAT 0.1 g; PROTEIN 9g; CARB 14g; CHOL 56mg; SODIUM 590mg; FIBER 3 g

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