



Bringing Sweet Potatoes to Your Table

Hey, buddies! It's Yamster the Hamster again with another super sweet potato story. Back in October, my mom and dad took me to Mr. French's sweet potato farm in South Louisiana. That's a trip I'll never forget! But if you read my story about that visit, you might be wondering what happens to all of those sweet potatoes after they are taken from the ground. Well, keep reading, because I'm going to tell you all about it.

After the farmer digs up the sweet potatoes, the workers collect them. This is a very important time because the workers will also separate the yams into different sizes: big ones and small ones. Why do they do this? Just keep reading!

Once all these wonderful sweet potatoes are gathered and sorted, it's time to take them to the storage house where they are "cured." Curing is a process that helps the sweet potatoes heal from any cuts, bruises or places where the skin was removed by accident. The temperature in the storage house is about 85 degrees,

and the air is very moist (about 90 or 95 percent humidity). After they are cured, the sweet potatoes are stored in a cooler place of about 55 or 60 degrees, the temperature of a nice fall day. The coolness helps them keep their weight up without sprouting or becoming dry and tough. Finally, the sweet potatoes are washed and checked to make sure they are good enough for you and me to eat. Then they are packed in boxes so they can take a ride on a big truck to get closer to our tables.

The farmer usually sells his yams according to their size. This is why the workers sorted the potatoes by size. The bigger yams are delivered whole to grocery stores, vegetable markets, restaurants and other food dealers. These are called "fresh" sweet potatoes. They are the kind you see at the store next to regular potatoes. They are the ones you can bake in the oven, or grill on the barbecue or cook lots of other ways. Fresh Louisiana Yams are delivered across the country to end up on the tables of thousands of families just like yours.



The farmer sells his smaller sweet potatoes to food companies, where they are turned into many different products. Some yams are canned, sometimes in a yummy sweet syrup. You can find them in the can in slices or chunks, or even whipped like mashed potatoes. Others will be formed into patties and frozen. Still more yams will be sliced very thin and fried to make sweet potato chips! But it doesn't stop there. These tasty sweet potatoes are also turned into mixes for biscuits, muffins and pancakes. Have you ever had sweet potato pancakes? Ask an adult to make them for you. They can buy the pancake mix — and all of these other wonderful sweet potato products — at their favorite grocery store.

So you see, once the sweet potatoes are harvested in the field, it still takes a while before they make it to your plate. A lot of men and women work very hard to make sure you get the freshest, tastiest yams possible.

No matter how you like your yummy yams, remember to live the Yamster way: Eat your sweet potatoes and have a yam-tastic day!