

Well Preserved

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension. It includes food preservation information and questions.

Potatoes

As one of the most popular vegetables, potatoes are seldom canned or frozen by the home food preserver. However, the manner in which fresh potatoes are stored will have an impact on their quality.

Store potatoes in a cool, dark place that is well ventilated. The ideal storage temperature is 45-50F. Do not refrigerate potatoes because potatoes stored below 40F will develop a sweet taste due to the conversion of starch to sugar. This increased sugar will cause potatoes to darken when cooked especially at high temperatures.

Sometimes you will find purple discoloration in the center and veins of some potatoes. This is caused by cold temperatures

which could be related to harvesting as well as home storage. The potato is perfectly fine to eat.

Cold temperatures also cause potatoes to turn black or gray when cooked. While storing potatoes in the refrigerator is not recommended, if you do, letting the potato warm gradually to room temperature before cooking can reduce the discoloration.

Prolonged exposure to light causes potatoes to turn green. The green on the skin of a potato is the build-up of a chemical called Solanine, which produces a bitter taste and, if eaten in large quantity, can cause illness. However, this is unlikely because of the bitter taste. If there is slight greening, cut away the green portions of the potato skin before cooking and eating it.

A warm, moist environment encourages sprouting of potatoes. Sprouts are a sign that the potato is trying to grow. Cut the sprouts away before cooking or eating the potato.



Can potatoes be frozen? The results will depend upon the type of potato used, its age, and your standards of taste. It is not generally recommended that potatoes be frozen because of their high water content which, when frozen, separates from the starch causing the reheated potato dish to become watery. Nevertheless, if you have lots of potatoes you may want to try. Prepare a small quantity first to see what you think of the results.

Some guidelines for success. Choose new, smaller potatoes, of the waxy type such as red or gold potatoes.

The following suggestions for freezing potatoes come from the

University of Illinois Cooperative Extension.

Garden Potatoes: Freeze them when they are about 1 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Wash and scrub the potatoes, leaving the skins on, if desired. Blanch 4 to 6 minutes if smaller than 1 to 1 1/2 inches, 8 to 10 minutes if larger. Cool, drain, and pack. To cook; add the frozen potatoes to enough boiling water to cover. Cook about 15 minutes or until tender.

French Fries: Commercially these are fast-frozen giving a different quality than home frozen fries. However, if you wish to try your own, wash, peel, and cut potatoes into 3/8 inch strips. Rinse them quickly in cold water to remove the surface starch. Drain well. Spread the strips in a single layer on a shallow pan. Brush with melted butter. Bake in a preheated oven at 450 F until golden brown and tender. Turn occasionally. Cool in the refrigerator, then pack, label, and freeze. To cook the frozen fries, bake on a shallow pan in a preheated 450 F oven until brown and tender. Turn occasionally. Salt to taste.

Mashed Potatoes: Prepare mashed potatoes as usual. Let cool quickly, and form into 1/2 inch thick patties. Place on a cookie sheet and freeze. As soon as they are frozen solid, pack them in containers or freezer bags. Label and place packages in the freezer. To serve, fry potatoes in butter until brown or brush them with melted fat and broil. They may also be defrosted in the microwave oven, topped with cheese, and cooked at 80 percent power until they are hot and the cheese melted.

Stuffed Baked Potatoes. Remove the cooked potato from the skin. Mash it; then return it to the skin. Add milk, butter, and seasoning if desired. Wrap and freeze. To serve, remove the wrap and bake in a 425-degree oven for 30 minutes. Use within 2 to 4 weeks.

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays 10:00 a.m.1:00 p.m. Call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Rm.1, Lancaster, PA, 17601.

Forget Curds, Watch For Whey

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Whey is the thin, watery part of milk that separates from curds during cheese-making. Although whey is mostly water, it contains whey protein — a complete protein that offers all of the amino acids the body needs in the right balance.

The most obvious place to find whey protein naturally is in good old-fashioned milk. Milk is about 3.5 percent protein by weight, and about 20 percent of that pro-

tein is whey protein. The protein in yogurt is also 20 percent whey protein. You might think cottage cheese would be a good source, too, but it's not: After being cooked and curdled, it is rinsed to remove lactose, and that also removes most of the whey protein.

But whey protein is also in a lot of other products. With more than 8 billion pounds of cheese produced each year, you can imagine how much whey is

around. Unfortunately, as late as 1980, about half of the whey produced in the United States was dumped into streams as a waste product.

Eventually, cheese-makers realized there's no use letting such a high-quality protein go to waste. Thanks to research (partly done by food scientists at Ohio State University), whey protein products have improved and are used extensively in the food in-

dustry.

For example, whey protein concentrate helps shortening disperse evenly in baked goods. Whey powder helps icings, toppings and cream fillings whip and foam more easily. Because of their high solubility and superior emulsification properties, whey protein products are also used in soups, sauces and salad dressings. Whey is also used as a high-quality source of protein in ener-

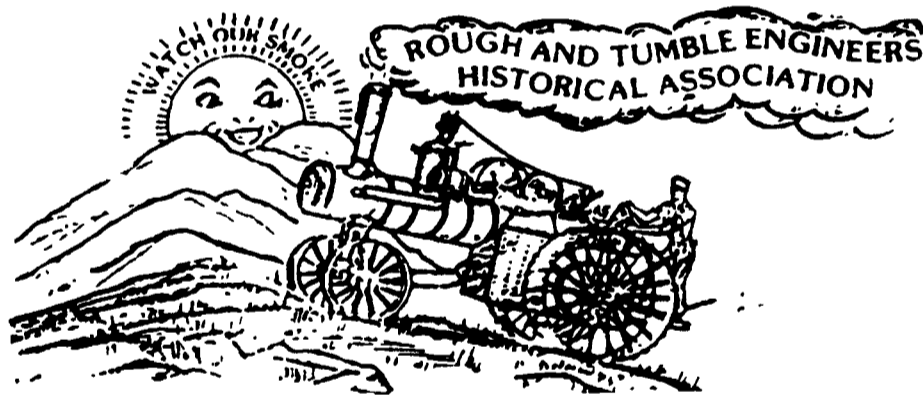
gy bars, and is sold in the form of protein powders at health food stores.

Whey's health advantages are still being uncovered. For instance, Ohio State University research recently showed whey protein can increase the level of a certain antioxidant, glutathione, in human prostate cells — at least in the lab. Glutathione helps fight free radicals that can cause cancer.

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PROGRAMS . . . Wednesday: Threshing 6:00, Tractor Games 6:30, Music 7:00; **Thursday:** Children's Pedal Pull 2:00, Antique Tractor Pull 6:30; **Friday:** Steam Games & Music 6:30; **Saturday:** Country Music Throughout The Day!

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