

POTATOES: A Sadly Neglected Vegetable

By Sara Cabot of [Little Lettice](#)

A mom of an 8 month old baby came up to me the other day while I was doing a demo and said “I’ve been doing the 4 day rule for each new food” [i.e., feeding your infant a single food for 4 days to check there is no reaction], “but I’m a bit scared of potatoes.”

“Why?” I asked, thinking that potatoes are perhaps one of the most benign and innocuous of vegetables, tummy-wise. And aren’t mashed potatoes a great comfort food?

“Well, actually,” she said, “we don’t really eat potatoes at home, so it’s an effort for me to go buy them and cook them especially for my Tom.”

There, she said it. Children will not be exposed to foods that their parents don’t like thus already **prelimiting** the variety that is so vital for them eating a balanced diet.

Another mom said to me once that she had written potatoes off as “empty calories,” so in defense of this much maligned food, I decided to investigate!

Why are potatoes good for us?

Did you know that the potato is one of the most perfect foods? What the English rudely call ‘the common old garden spud’ is in fact a hero when it comes to nutrition. Potatoes provide all but one of the essential amino acids, and other important nutrients including calcium, niacin, several B vitamins, vitamin C, potassium, phosphorus, sulfur, chlorine, magnesium, and iron.

Why organic?

Conventional potatoes are sprayed with a sprout inhibitor that can be toxic. Potatoes are on the EWG’s dirty dozen list as one of 12 fruits/veggies found to contain the most chemicals. Thus, buying organic is even more important if you intend to eat the highly nutritious potato skins, since they bear the brunt of the spraying.

First food for baby

Potatoes are wonderfully easy on the stomach and make some of the stronger veggies more palatable. Some yummy pureed combinations are:

- Carrot, leek, potato
- Carrot, cauliflower, potato
- Leek, potato, zucchini
- Broccoli, potato

Quick toddler recipe (from 1 year)

When moms ask me about an easy and nutritious toddler recipe, I often cite a baked potato. It makes a nice hot meal on a winter day. Plus, it's easy and can be baked in the oven while you do something else. You can mix it with a variety of toppings such as:

- grated cheese
- vegetable purees
- sour cream or cream cheese with chives/chopped cucumber/chopped scallions
- tuna fish mixed with mayo & chopped celery
- chopped ham or turkey

For the whole family – the secret of yummy mashed potatoes (see step 7)

You will need:

- 2 medium potatoes per person
- butter
- salt & pepper
- pinch of grated nutmeg (optional)
- heavy cream (optional)

1. Fill a heavy saucepan with water $\frac{3}{4}$ full, add a pinch of salt and put on to boil.
2. Peel the potatoes and cut in half.
3. Add to boiling water and cook until potatoes can be pierced easily with a fork.
4. Drain potatoes and replace in saucepan.
5. Add butter, salt, and pepper to your liking and start to mash.
6. Add some cream to taste, more butter (if needed) and a grating of nutmeg – this brings out the taste of the potatoes.
7. When the potatoes can be mashed no more, get a fork (**this is the secret of mashed potatoes**) and whip your mash vigorously with it. This will serve to lighten the potatoes making them delightfully smooth.

WARNING: Never put boiled potatoes in a blender or they will come out like glue! The best way to mash them is by hand.

*Serve with roast chicken for the ultimate in comfort food!