

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Sampler

~ Potatoes ~

Unit 4 of 6

(As you can see from the title of this Unit, the spelling of more than one potato is not "potatos" as you might think. Say out loud the words "toes" and the word "tos" and you can hear why.) You may find this topic unusual, yet you'll see in the next few pages that there are many, many things to say about our trusty vegetable, the potato.

Potato History

As for potatoes, at least 200 varieties exist! There is a book, *100 Vegetables and Where They Came From*, by William Woys Weaver which lists and discusses different varieties of many vegetables.

Here are only some of the potato varieties included in the book:

- beauty of Hebron
- Burbank
- candy stripe
- Congo
- eureka purple
- Green Mountain
- Irish cobbler
- purple cow horn
- snowflake

Another is called the "Arran Victory Potato" and here is why. Arran is an island off the coast of Scotland. It had deep red soil - in the Scottish language, "aaran" refers to this red color. To quote *100 Vegetables and Where They Came From*, "These potatoes are enveloped in a skin that can only be described as delicate lilac. When they come fresh from the ground, the color is so intense that they resemble candy imitations." This breed of potato was developed around 1918, which explains the victory part; it is a salute to Great Britain's victory in World War I.

1. Take one of the potato varieties listed above and guess the reason for its name.

2. Make up your own potato name and explain why it's called that.

The varieties of potatoes seem endless, but the recipes that include potatoes probably are endless. How about "Potato-Smoked Salmon Cake with Chived Yogurt"? Really, it's in a cookbook! There is a cookbook titled *Potato* -- the entire (very large) book has only potato recipes.

3. Make up a recipe that includes potatoes that would hopefully taste wonderful!

Back to history...

Certain parts of the world are associated with potatoes, Ireland perhaps more than any. Potatoes are so plentiful that in the past they were the staple of the Irish diet, especially for the poor who depended on them for survival. Just like any other plant, the potato is the favorite of certain kinds of parasites and insects. A "potato blight" struck in 1846, devastating the crops. To make the situation even more critical, typhoid fever followed. The poor were faced with starvation, and hundreds of thousands died. The only hope of survival for many was emigration out of Ireland to other countries, and more than a million came to America between 1846 and 1851. In 1845, the population of Ireland was 8,500,000. Due largely to the potato famine, typhoid fever, and emigration, it dropped to 6,500,000.

In the U.S., Idaho and Maine are the states best known for growing potatoes. There are many reasons crops are grown in a certain part of the country. One is the type of soil.

4. What are some other factors determining why a specific crop grows well in a particular area?

Unlike a vegetable such as beans, the potato itself grows underground. Therefore, the harvesting process is very different from that of beans, apples, tomatoes, and other crops that grow above ground.

5. Design a piece of equipment that could be used to harvest potatoes.

Would you imagine that vegetables could create a political uproar? Ronald Reagan found out when he was President. The condiment used on potatoes more than any other is ketchup, of course. There was concern in the country that school lunches were not healthy enough, a big factor being the lack of vegetables. President Reagan announced that one particular vegetable that could be counted is ketchup. His administration thought the logic was clear -- ketchup is made from tomatoes, the tomato is a vegetable, and vegetables are healthy.

6. What was his purpose in trying to convince the public of this?

7. Would you buy his logic? Why or why not?

Food can be expensive, meaning lack of a balanced diet can often affect those who are poor.

8. Do you think having a garden would be a worthy endeavor for a poor person? Explain the pros and cons.

Fast Food

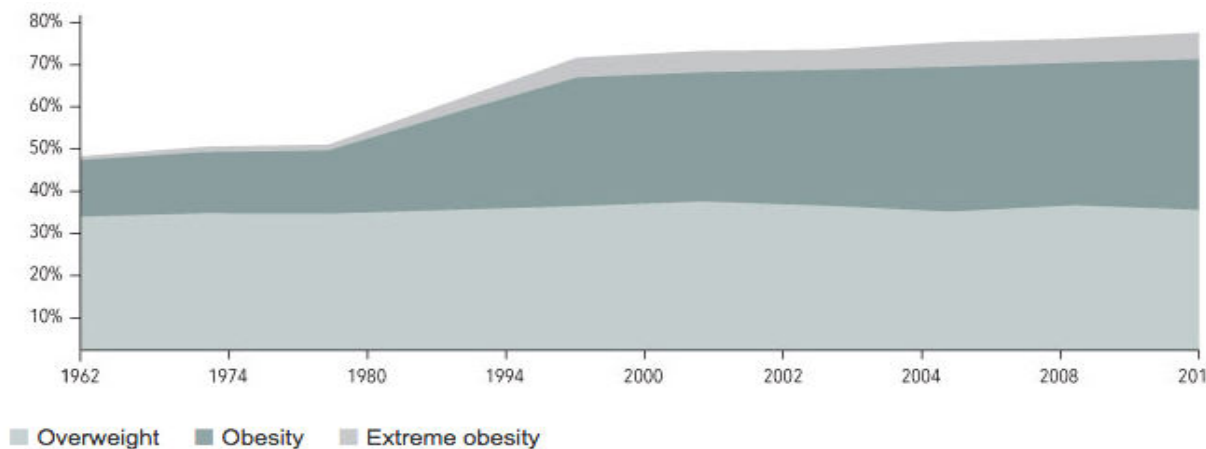
In the same way Ireland is known for potatoes, fast food is known for fat, and the kind of vegetable being deep-fried in fat is the potato. The lettuce and tomato, which go on a burger, are the healthiest part of the meal. The problem is, fast food tastes so good to most people. Sugar, fat, and salt appeal to the taste buds; that's all there is to it.

9. If you could go to a drive-in right now, what would you order? Okay, now walk around a farmer's market - what would you buy? Which sounds tastier to you and why?

10. Design your own food market. Name at least ten stands (these could range from healthy, like a fresh fruit salad stand, to unhealthy, like a fried dough stand). Draw a map of the layout of the different stands.

Part of a healthy diet should include fat, but Americans are overdoing it. We have an obesity epidemic in this country. It affects all ages, races, and ethnic groups, both men and women, and people in every state.

68% of adults in America today are overweight (25-29 pounds too heavy)! 35% of those who are overweight are considered to be obese (30 pounds and over). The rate at which this problem is increasing is astounding.



<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/Pages/overweight-obesity-statistics.aspx>

Obesity increases the health risks of heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. Orthopedic problems are an issue because of the extra stress on knees and ankles. Obese people also have more psychological problems.

11. Exactly what kind of psychological and emotional problems would affect overweight people?

It's true that overweight people do face discrimination.

12. If someone who is applying for a job has excellent references, why would weight have anything to do with getting hired?

Probably the major recommendation for changing this trend is education by schools, governments, home and health care workers, etc. But doesn't everyone already know that eating too much food cooked with fat makes you fat?

13. List (at least) four reasons McDonalds is so popular when everyone knows the food is unhealthy.

14. Who do you think is responsible for keeping children from becoming obese and why?

15. Write a letter to a kid explaining to them why they should start eating healthier.

Potato Stories

Some of our most well-known fictional characters are associated with vegetables. "Popeye the Sailor Man" was a popular cartoon character who was known for getting his strength by eating spinach. Bugs Bunny was another cartoon character, and his trademark was a carrot.

16. Make up a show about a cartoon character whose trademark is a potato. Describe the character and what would happen in the first episode of the show.

Several well-known fairy tales are based on vegetables.

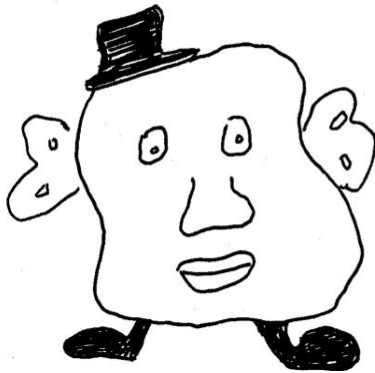
In the children's story "Jack and the Beanstalk", Jack trades the family cow for magic beans that grow into a giant beanstalk. When Jack climbs up the beanstalk, he finds the land of a giant who is very rich. Jack steals the giant's gold, and when the giant comes after him, Jack chops down the beanstalk, and the giant falls and dies. Jack and his mother then live happily ever after.

17. Do you like the ending to this story? Why or why not?

18. Write your own fairytale that involves a vegetable!

Potato Games

Real potatoes are used in one very popular children's game, or at least it used to be popular. The game is called Mr. Potato Head, and it comes in a box with plastic ears, a nose, and other plastic pieces. Children take a real potato and make a character out of it by sticking different combinations of pieces in it. Encouraging creativity by making your Mr. Potato Head unlike everyone else's is what it's all about. Here is what a typical Mr. Potato head used to look like:



19. Draw your own Mr. Potato Head.

Children now play many of their games on computers. It would be possible to play Mr. Potato Head using a potato image on the screen.

20. Create another game that involves a potato somehow.

Here's another potato game:

21. Using only letters from the word "POTATO", list as many new words as you can.

22. Take five of these words and write a story that includes them all.

23. What is a "couch potato" and why do people use this term?

Not too many words rhyme with "potato". "Tomato" is the one usually used. Remember that poems don't have to rhyme, so here's an easier assignment.

24. Write a free verse poem about potatoes.

Remember, back in the "Stormy Weather" Unit, you connected feelings to animals and to weather. So let's go far out and ask...

25. Which vegetable would you associate with:

- a) anger
- b) laughter
- c) intelligence

26. Explain your choice.

Finally:

27. Write about anything to do with potatoes.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes