

BUY FRESH - BUY LOCAL

Food of the Week: Garlic

History

Garlic is one of the world's oldest vegetables with extraordinary taste and health beneficial characteristics. It originates from Asia, and its 2000 to 5000-year long use has been recognized in Egypt, China, and Babylon. Today, wild garlic crop grows in areas from India, China, Egypt, to Ukraine.

Garlic Facts

Garlic belongs to the Allium group and its specific name is Allium sativum. It exists in at least 20 different varieties, with color changing from green, to white, to purple. Its distinct intense taste increases as the crop matures. The garlic cloves are planted to grow in moist soils in sunny areas to produce its characteristic long flat leaves that can reach up to 20 inches. Once the leaves turn yellow and its lavender or white colored flowers dies, the garlic is harvested. The vegetable is dried and stored in a cool and dry area and can last for 3-4 weeks in 68 ° F and 60% humidity, or 6-7 months in 32 ° F and 70% humidity.

Garlic has many physiological properties in the body. It has been shown to facilitate the removal of heavy metals in the kidneys, decrease blood pressure, decrease white blood cells, decrease cholesterol levels, and can work as an anticoagulant. Garlic can stimulate the gastrointestinal function where it helps prevent constipation. However, garlic decreases the body's tolerance for alcohol, but has shown to be effective in curing hangovers. Studies have shown that garlic may be effective against the common cold. The National Cancer Institute also reports anti-carcinogenic effects of garlic.

Nutrition Facts (per 3 cloves)

Energy 13 kcal, Protein 1 g, Fat 0 g, Carbohydrates 3 g, Fiber 0 g, Vitamin C 3 mg, Potassium 36 mg

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Recipe of the Week: Garlic Sweet Potatoes

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients:

1 small whole head garlic
6 small unpeeled sweet potatoes (2 ¼ lbs)
1/3 cup low-fat sour cream
¼ tsp salt; 1/8 tsp pepper

Trim ¼ inch from top of head of garlic. Do not peel or separate cloves. Wrap garlic in aluminum foil coated with vegetable spray. Place garlic and sweet potatoes on a baking sheet. Bake in 400° F oven for 1 hour and 15 minutes; let cool 10 minutes. Separate cloves and squeeze to extract 2 tsp pulp. Remove and discard skins from potatoes. Mash potato pulp; stir in garlic pulp, sour cream, salt and pepper. Serve hot.

Nutrient contents per serving: calories: 202, carbohydrates: 43 g, protein: 3.5 g, fat: 2 g, cholesterol: 4 mg, fiber: 5 g, sodium: 121 mg, potassium: 383 mg, vitamin A: 3425 RE
Recipe adapted from
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/food>

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