Northampton Survival Center
A food pantry serving Hampshire County since 1979

Harvest News

Winter 2023

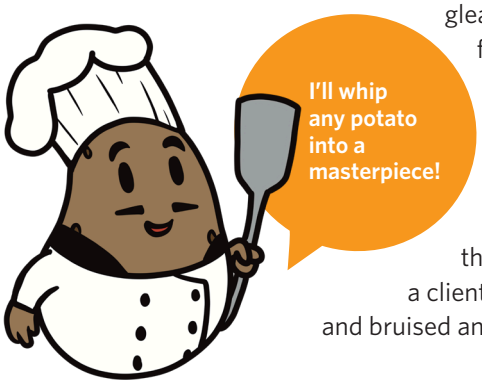
THE POTATO—OUR HUMBLE HERO

MASHED, BAKED, BROILED, FRIED, roasted, crisped into chips, scalloped, loaded, chopped up for hash, turned to wedges, hasselbacked, made into gnocchi, rolled into croquettes, pureed in soups, chunked in stews... there's seemingly no end to what can be done with the humble, hearty potato.

WHY ARE WE TALKING 'TATERS?

Here at the Center, potatoes are a staple in the pantry and we distribute nearly 25,000 lbs. of potatoes every year. But how they get here and what happens to them varies.

A bag of potatoes might make it to the Center as a donation from a local farmer, gleaned by volunteers from Rachel's Table, purchased from distributor Marty's Local, ordered from the Food Bank, unexpectedly dropped off by a tractor-trailer, or picked up last minute from a local grocery store. Those potatoes might be Yukon Golds, fingerlings, reds, or russets... Once here, that potato might make its way to a busy family who requests potatoes in their curbside order or be delivered right to the door of a client without transportation. A few might arrive battered and bruised and end up feeding a local goat or turned into compost.



We hope you'll peel back the layers with us and learn a little more about the important work of feeding folks in Hampshire County using the lens of a favorite tuber.

Some ways our readers use their potatoes:

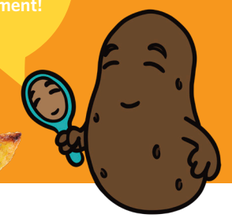
"Cubed & crisped up in a cast iron pan with onion, pepper, garlic, ginger, and seasoning (creole, adobo, smoked paprika, or steak seasoning are good places to start). Scrape up the bits stuck to the pan—they're the tastiest. Add a few sprigs of kale or braising greens, and egg, meat, or beans, and enjoy!"
—Rebecca

"I'm half Portuguese, so I go for Caldo Verde (green broth), also known as Portuguese Kale Soup."
—Louisa

"My favorite is old-fashioned potato soup." —Denise

"I love potatoes every way possible. Mashed potatoes would have to be my favorite with butter, salt, pepper, sour cream and cheese—lots and lots of cheese!" —Kimberly

In the summer, clients can pick fresh herbs next door at **Abundance Farm**. Dill, parsley, basil, and rosemary are great complements to almost any potato recipe.



* **Did you know that sometimes wholesalers refuse large deliveries? If a truck full of food has even one case with minimal damage, the order can be rejected.**

A potato's trek from field to table

Where we get the potatoes

Three times a week, a volunteer takes our van to the **Food Bank of Western Massachusetts** to pick up our order. This week, we picked up 150 lbs. of potatoes.

and

We purchase more than 2,000 lbs. of locally sourced produce from Marty's Local every week, which they deliver to the Center.

and surprise sources...

We often get last-minute calls from tractor-trailer drivers asking if we can use hundreds of pounds of food all at once. We then step into gear and call other food pantries and programs like Manna Community Kitchen to share the bounty. *

and

Sometimes we run short. If a delivery order is running late or we go through more potatoes than usual, our Distribution Manager Carlos will run to a local supermarket to ensure we have enough that day.

What happens next?

Our staff determines how many potatoes we need for clients. No matter what, potatoes get weighed, logged, and set aside for all our programs. Then, our volunteers help distribute those potatoes...

Dave packs potatoes into delivery orders that go to individual homes and housing sites.

Judy packs three or four russets in each Pantry Fresh meal kit this month.

When Rachel's Table gleans potatoes or a farmer brings by more than we planned for, the extras are offered on our trolley at outdoor distribution, where clients can take as many as they can use.

Personal shopper Leslie provides clients with their requests for produce when they arrive at the center for curbside pickup.

Every second Wednesday in Goshen, Francine helps distribute bags containing potatoes for our Hilltown Pantry clients.

Then onto tables

When our Pantry Manager Alexander inspects potatoes, he'll set the damaged ones aside to be eaten by goats at a local farm!

Betty, in her 70s, will receive potatoes with her delivery order this week, as planned.

Our December meal kit contains ingredients and a recipe *(see back page)* for Potato Pancakes (Latkes).

Client Sara asked for four potatoes, planning to slice them thinly, coat them in olive oil and spices she got from the Center, and pop them in her air fryer for a chip-like treat.

Northampton Survival Center | 265 Prospect Street, Northampton, MA 01060 | 413-586-6564 | **www.northamptonsurvival.org**

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Harvest News *is published semi-annually by the Northampton Survival Center, 265 Prospect St., Northampton, MA 01060*

Northampton Survival Center is an Equal Opportunity provider.

BE A LOCAL HERO buy locally grown

We're a Local Hero! When sourcing food for clients, we buy fresh produce from local providers whenever possible.

United Way

United Way of the Franklin & Hampshire Region

This project is made possible by City of Northampton ARPA funds.

Pantry Fresh
Easy recipes with simple ingredients

A program of the Northampton Survival Center

Potato Pancakes (Latkes)

Total prep and cook time: **45 minutes**

Servings: **10–12 pancakes**

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lbs. russet potatoes (3 to 4 potatoes)
- 1 medium yellow onion, peeled and quartered
- 2 large eggs
- 2 Tbsp. unseasoned dry breadcrumbs
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper (or more to taste)
- 1 cup canola oil
- Applesauce and/or sour cream (for serving)

Equipment

- Knife and cutting board
- Metal vegetable grater
- Cheesecloth or clean, thin kitchen towel
- Wooden spoon
- Mixing bowl
- 10- to 12-inch cast iron skillet
- Metal spatula

Instructions

1. Scrub potatoes with warm water to remove any excess dirt but do not peel the potatoes. Cut each potato in half crosswise.
2. Grate the potatoes into a large bowl using a food processor, hand grater, or box grater.
3. Remove the outer skin from the onion, and cut in quarters.
4. Grate the onion into the bowl with the potatoes.
5. Take a clean towel or piece of cheesecloth and place the grated vegetables in the center. Gather the points of the cloth into the center and wrap tight around the vegetables. Dangle the bundle over a large bowl, then twist and squeeze the potatoes and onion as hard as you can until no more liquid comes out of the potato and onion shreds.
6. Give the liquid a few minutes to settle. The starch from the potatoes will separate from the water you've wrung out. Gently pour off water from the top, leaving the thicker potato starch.
7. Unwrap the cloth. Dump the dry mixture of potatoes and onions to the separated starch.
8. Add eggs, breadcrumbs, salt, and pepper to the bowl. Mix well, making sure that the potato starch is evenly distributed with the rest of the ingredients. Let batter rest for 10 minutes.
9. Heat the oil over a medium-high heat in a large skillet at a depth of 1/4 inch (for a 10-inch skillet you'll need 1 cup of oil). Test the heat by adding a small bit of the potato mixture. If it sizzles immediately, you're ready to make the pancakes.
10. Form pancakes one at a time. Use enough of the mixture to flatten with your fingers into a 4-inch patty.
11. Slide the pancake into the hot oil. Do not drop! Place the patty on your metal spatula and ease into the heated oil, using a fork to nudge the pancake into the pan.
12. Cook until deeply golden-brown, 4 to 5 minutes per side, adjusting the heat if necessary.
13. Transfer the fried pancake to a paper towel-lined baking sheet to drain for 2 minutes. Serve warm.

Potato, potahto: How to say "potato" in languages of clients we serve

Arabic: البطاطس	Pashto: کچالو
French: pomme de terre	Polish: Ziemniak
Greek: πατάτα	Portuguese: batata
Haitian Creole: pòmdetè	Russian: картофель
Kinyarwanda: ibirayi	Spanish: papa
Mandarin Chinese: 土豆	Ukranian: картопля