

Baked sweet potato wedges offer healthier option

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From simple soup to fancy desserts, sweet potatoes are seen sprouting up in a variety of places. Packaged beautifully by Mother Nature, these tubers are hard to overlook. Naturally vibrant orange, yellow, red and purple hues, enhanced by a high carotenoid content, make sweet potatoes an eye-catching platter presentation.

"Ranking high in antioxidants, low in caloric intake, the sweet potato is the new superfood," said Andrea Ovard, clinical dietitian at the University of Utah Hospital. A superfood is a food that is considered nutritionally dense. "Rich in fiber, a great source for Vitamin C and potassium, one medium sweet potato contains a mere 100 calories." Ovard advises consuming baked, grilled or steamed tuber with their skins on for added beneficial nutrients and fiber.

My recipe for seasoned, baked sweet potato wedges offers a healthy option over deep-fried potatoes or bagged, processed chips. You can substitute russets for the sweet potatoes or prepare the recipe using a medley of both. Experiment with your favorite spices or keep it simple with fine sea-salt and pepper to taste.

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BAKED SWEET POTATO WEDGES

Makes: 6-8 servings

2 large or 3 medium classic orange sweet potatoes, washed

1 medium purple sweet potato, washed

5-6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

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Fresh ground black pepper, to taste

Fine sea salt, to taste

Thyme, crushed, to taste

Optional: red pepper flakes, just a few for heat, or grated Parmesan cheese.

Wash potatoes and pat dry. Do not peel. Depending on the size of the potato, first cut each tuber in half or if it is large, cut into thirds. Then slice multiple times creating several wedges. Make sure one side of each wedge has skin on. You can usually get 24-30 wedges from each potato.

Place all cut wedges into a large bowl. Pour 5 tablespoons of olive oil over the potatoes. With a heavy spatula stir well several times, making sure all wedges are covered (but not dripping) in oil. If they appear too dry or needing more oil, add one tablespoon more. Again, stir well until you are sure all potatoes are moistened.

Add spices according to taste preference. I recommend that each wedge has a nice sprinkling of each spice. Start by adding one-half to one full teaspoon of each desired seasoning over the potatoes. Determine how spicy you want the potatoes from there.

Continue to fold the oil and spices into the wedges. Transfer the coated potatoes into a deep baking dish or cookie sheet with sides. Evenly spread the wedges.

They should not be placed in tandem or stacked. Placing the wedges together closely on the pan is fine.

Bake uncovered for 50-55 minutes at 400 degrees. Russets will crisp up and firm in the baking process, where sweet potatoes will have a crispy skin but give you a softer bite.

Optional: Serve with small condiment bowls of specialty mustards, ketchup, barbecue sauce or ranch dressing.

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