



Alliance for Potato  
Research & Education

## Potatoes Make the Grade for School Meals

Across America, food waste is attracting attention in school cafeterias as an issue with both nutrition and economic impacts. With the implementation of the new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) school nutrition standards—which include a mandate to increase fruit and vegetable offerings—many school foodservice authorities have expressed concerns that even more food will be wasted and along with it, precious dollars and key nutrients.

The good news is research suggests that schools may be able to reduce plate waste and save money by optimizing entrée and vegetable pairings. The study, conducted at Texas A&M University, demonstrated that pairing entrées with popular vegetables such as white potatoes—served as oven-baked French fried potatoes, tater tots, and potato wedges—resulted in the least amount of plate waste. What’s more, four out of five of the food pairings with the lowest overall plate waste included white potatoes.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Potatoes have one of the highest contents of both potassium and fiber. One medium baked potato provides 26% of the daily value of potassium (920 mg), and 16% of the daily value of fiber (3.6 g)<sup>2</sup>.

And, a serving of potato wedges contributes 13% (440mg) of the daily value of potassium and 8% of the daily value of fiber (2g)<sup>3</sup>.

### TOP 5 VEGGIES ON THE LUNCH TRAY (Post-Implementation)

1. Tater Tots
2. Potato Wedges
3. Corn on the Cob
4. Mashed Potatoes + Gravy
5. Oven Baked French Fries

Based on mean number of students selecting that item<sup>1</sup>

Food isn’t nutritious unless it is consumed. That’s why gaining a better understanding of entrée and vegetable pairings is so important. Potatoes deliver the “win-win-win” in school meals: they are a popular vegetable for students, result in less vegetable plate waste, and deliver nutrition parents want in their children’s school meals.

<sup>1</sup> Ishdorj, A. , Capps Jr., O. , Storey, M. and Murano, P. (2015) Investigating the Relationship between Food Pairings and Plate Waste from Elementary School Lunches. *Food and Nutrition Sciences*, 6, 1029-1044. doi: 10.4236/fns.2015.611107.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Nutrient Data Laboratory. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 26 (2013). 11674, Potato, baked, flesh and skin, without salt.

<sup>3</sup> Skin-On Wedge Cuts, Brand: LW PRIVATE RESERVE® <http://www.lambweston.com/product/detail/32R>





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## Power Up with Potatoes on the Lunch Tray

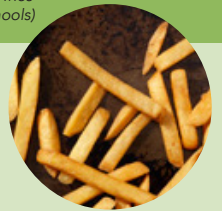
The white potato is one of the most popular vegetables served in school meals. Parents can feel good knowing their kids are getting several key nutrients when they enjoy them with lunch. White potatoes are one of the highest sources of two shortfall nutrients—potassium and fiber—and are a good source of vitamin C and magnesium.

In fact, a small serving of oven-baked French fried potatoes—the type served in more than 90% of schools—contributes 10% of the daily value for potassium and 8% of the daily value for fiber in just 116 calories and 3.6 g of fat.

### Oven-Baked Fries<sup>3</sup> (over 90% of fries served in schools)

small serving, 74 grams

- 116 calories
- 3.6 grams fat (0.8 g saturated)
- 0 mg cholesterol
- 0 g trans fat
- 330 mg potassium (10% DV)
- 2 g fiber (8% DV)
- 5% DV Magnesium
- 6% DV Vitamin B6
- 16% DV Vitamin C



### Tater Tots<sup>3</sup>

small serving, 79 grams

- 152 calories
- 7 grams fat (1.3 g saturated)
- 0 mg cholesterol
- 0 g trans fat
- 230 mg potassium (7% DV)
- 2 g fiber (8% DV)
- 5% DV Magnesium
- 8% DV Vitamin B6
- 20% DV Vitamin C



## Nutrient Rich and Penny Wise

Fruits and vegetables are among the richest sources of potassium and fiber, but how can schools (and parents) pack a nutrition punch without breaking the bank? At just 19 cents a serving, potatoes in all forms are one of the most budget-friendly sources of these shortfall nutrients.

Potassium Content of Commonly Consumed Fruits and Vegetables



Data are from USDA, Agricultural Research Service, National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 25, July 2013

Dietary Fiber Content of Commonly Consumed Vegetables



Data are from USDA, Agricultural Research Service, National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 26. Values are for Frozen vegetables – peas, carrots, broccoli, green beans, corn, and cauliflower – that have been boiled; raw vegetables are Romaine and iceberg lettuce, peppers, celery, tomatoes and cucumber with peel.

**With powerful nutrition, affordability and popularity, recommending potatoes is a smart solution for school meals. For more resources, including handouts and the latest research, visit [APRE.org](http://APRE.org).**

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Nutrient Data Library. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 26, (2013) potato, oven baked fries; potato puffs.