

'King Potato' is everybody's favourite

uchita Malik

... a Sunday and we
quizzing. My hus-
ed our daughter to
e thing that was
e throughout the
he was set thinking
y son cut her short
ted out innocently:
o. All of us looked at
her. None could find
h his claim. Yes, he
t.

... is the world's single
ely grown vegetable
of the most impor-
ls universally accept-
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ws that originated in
merica, the potato
rom a species that
ew in Bolivia, Chile
a. The Inca Indians of
untries grew potatoes
alleys of the Andes
ains more than 400
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sh explorers in South
ca were the first
ans to eat potatoes As
er of fact the word
is believed to be a
of the Spanish word
The Spaniards intro-
them into Europe in
1492.



The chief uses of potato are as a food, for the manufacture of potato starch, and for the distilling of alcohol. But the forms in which it can be used are probably as many as its varieties or even more. It depends upon you as to how and for what purpose you use it. Some forms of its usage have been most aptly rhymed in the photograph taken from the People's Museum in Glasgow where we came across a glass-box which contained a potato with a crown over its head and two beautiful rhyming phrases extolling its virtues. The fact that potato remains the staple diet of England is known to us all but finding the potato crowned in the People's Museum was amazing indeed, though a befitting tribute to this global phenomenon.

Whether it is in England, Wales or Scotland or France, the USA or the East, an international traveller can vouch for its global standing. If it is a coach-journey, everybody is eating crisps and chocolates, if the coach stops at a nearby kiosk, you have the fish and chips joints or you can see people eating steaming hot potato fingers for a meal with a can of juice in their hands. MacDonald's French fries

part of our Indian vegetable stock market since ages, though unsung. You can't think of an Indian meal without potato: *aloo-gobhi*, *aloo-methi*, *aaloo-matar*, *Dam-aloo* or be it the mouth-watering *aloo-parantha* or *aloo-pakora*, an all time favourite with the children and adults alike. Come the advancements in food processing technology and the budding entrepreneurs have started exploiting the weakness of children to the hilt by flooding the market with all sorts of potato products. Potato crisps in fancy packages are a product of the modern world. We too, as children, had our own share of the indigenous varieties of *aloo* chips prepared by our loving *nani* and *dadi* by skillfully chopping potatoes, carefully dipping them in piping hot water and sun-drying them on pieces of old muslin cloth. Once dry, deep fry them and would make an excellent savoury snack to be served during tea-time and kids' parties. Such usefulness and still the unsung 'king' of our Indian vegetables set-up.

Potatoes are prepared in various ways — baked, boiled, fried and mashed and are also served with meat or fish and with other vegetables. These days, food proces-

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eland and Scotland.
became the principal
f Ireland and came to
wn as the Irish potato
the Irish population
ded heavily on it for
nce.

immigrants introduced
in North America
they settled in New
shire in 1719. From
1847, Ireland's potato
ailed because of late
. As a result, about
0 Irish people died of
e or starvation. During
0s, the development of
processing industry
ed in a tremendous
in use of potatoes in
products as chips and

... dreds of varieties of
... have been developed
...hout the world. In the
...d Kingdom, the *King*
...d VII, introduced in
... still remains popular.
...he 1970s, *King Edward*
...e *Majestic* were the
...wo main crop varieties
...standing importance in
...nited Kingdom. Since
...70s, *Pentland Crown* and
...*Piper*, two newer vari-
...ave become popular.
... principal potato pro-
...g areas in India are
...b, Haryana, Uttar
...sh, Bihar, West Bengal
...ssam. The main vari-
...of potato are *Phulva* in
... Orissa and Uttar
...sh, and *Magnum Borum*
...harashtra and Gujarat.
...er parts of the country,
... and *Gola* are more pop-



'King Potato' displayed in People's Museum, Glasgow

... eating crisps and chocolates,
if the coach stops at a nearby
kiosk, you have the fish and
chips joints or you can see
people eating steaming hot
potato fingers for a meal with
a can of juice in their hands.
MacDonald's French fries
remain a hot favourite with
people of all age-groups and
all nationalities. While in
Scotland, I once casually
asked Debbie, a Scottish
friend of mine, to give me a
recipe of fresh vegetable soup
since I was bored with the
canned varieties. She
promised one and very
promptly next day handed
me a piece of paper on which
was written a recipe of potato
soup. Oh Gosh! not again,
said I, folding the paper neat-
ly and keeping it in my purse
leaving poor Debbie in utter
bewilderment at my sponta-
neous exclamation.

Potato has been an integral

... and still the unsung 'king' of
our Indian vegetables set-up.
Potatoes are prepared in
various ways — baked,
boiled, fried and mashed and
are also served with meat or
fish and with other vegeta-
bles. These days, food proces-
sors can turn potatoes into
instant mashed-potato pow-
der and other products. Food
canners use potatoes in such
foods as soup and stew.
Potato, the multi-faceted king
of vegetables is also a
favourite with chefs in the
hotel-industry. It comes
handy in preparing delicacies
when in a hurry or out of
stock with fresh vegetables.
An adulterating influence to
different vegetables, it suc-
ceeds in lending its unique
taste to whatever ingredient it
is mixed with. Hats off to the
king of vegetables: the potato.

Indeed, let's pray: "God,
Bless, 'em!"

maris riper, two newer varieties have become popular.

The principal potato producing areas in India are Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam. The main varieties of potato are *Phulva* in Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh, and *Magnum Borum* in Maharashtra and Gujarat. In other parts of the country, *Satha* and *Gola* are more popular. While the varieties may be of prime concern to the growers from the point of view of yield, disease-resistance and longer life-span, it is primarily the taste that matters for the consumers.

MacDonald claims to be using the same variety of potatoes for preparation of 'French fries' through its outlets internationally to ensure the uniformity in taste. *Pahari Aloo* grown in the foothills of Shivaliks is the most preferred variety for the well-to-do as it does not sweeten the vegetable.

Potatoes also have a high nutritional value. A potato consists of about 80 per cent water and 20 per cent solid matter. Starch makes up about 85 per cent of the solid material and most of the rest is protein. Potatoes contain many vitamins, including niacin, riboflavin, thiamine and Vitamin C. They also contain such minerals as calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium and sulphur. Contrary to the common notion, potatoes are not especially fattening unless flavoured with butter, gravy or sour cream. An average-sized baked potato that weighs from 170 to 225 grams and contains fewer than 100 calories.