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Yam it Up with this Spicy Sweet Potato Dish

By Susie Iventosch



Sweet potatoes ("yams") with Mexican spice, peppers, toasted pumpkins seeds and baked skins Photos Susie Iventosch

This dish has its inspiration from one I recently shared with my son in Austin, Texas at a restaurant named Odd Duck. The place specializes in small plates, and after we ordered this tasty dish, we wished we had more. So, naturally, we ordered a second one, but by the time it arrived, we realized we were going to have to save it for a leftover day. When you order three or four, those small dishes can really creep on you.

The menu indicated that the dish was made with sweet potatoes, but in looking back, I realize that their "sweet potato" must have been a yam, because it was so orange in color. This prompted me to look into the difference between sweet potatoes and yams. I had always thought that a sweet potato was blond in color, while the yam was a more vibrant orange, but both were similar in shape. After all, this is how they are always labeled in the produce departments.

Well, it turns out that we have been fooled all along. Both of these root vegetables are actually sweet potatoes, but the USDA labels the orange sweet potatoes "yams" in order to differentiate between the two. In actuality, a yam is an African root vegetable, much larger in size, and with a rough, bark-like skin and starchy white, purple or reddish-colored flesh.

So, even though this dish is named after the sweet potato, be sure to pick the orange ones, or "yams" as we commonly refer to them! I made it the first time with the whiter sweet potato and it just wasn't as good as the second attempt, which was made with the "yam" sweet potato.

RECIPE

(Makes 6 for a side dish)

INGREDIENTS

2 "yams" (sweet potatoes)

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon Mexican seasoning of your choice (you can make your own, recipe to follow)

Salt to taste

1 poblano pepper or Anaheim, seeded and thinly sliced and cut into small pieces

Garnish

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds, toasted

Crunchy baked sweet potato skins

1 tablespoon crumbled goat or blue cheese (optional)

Plain yogurt

Lime wedges

DIRECTIONS

Scrub sweet potatoes well. Remove any bad spots with a paring knife. Peel and reserve skins. Cut sweet potatoes into bite-sized cubes. Place in a skillet and toss with olive oil, spices and salt. Cook, uncovered, over medium-high heat for about five minutes, until slightly browned on the edges. Cover, reduce heat to low and cook until tender when pierced with a knife. Remove from

heat. Add peppers to sweet potatoes and toss.

Meanwhile, cut the skins into small pieces and toss with olive oil and sea salt. Bake at 350F for about 5 minutes, or until crispy. Remove from oven.

Serve sweet potatoes onto plates, and garnish with skins, toasted pumpkin seeds, cilantro, cheese crumbles, a dollop of plain yogurt and a sprinkle of fresh squeezed lime. (Or you can toss all but the yogurt in a large bowl and serve from there!)

Mexican Spice

(Adapt to your taste: hotter, milder, more garlic, less, etc.)

1-2 teaspoons paprika

1 teaspoon powdered cumin

1/2 teaspoon powdered coriander

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1/4 teaspoon chili powder

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/4 teaspoon onion powder (or 1/2 teaspoon dried minced onion)

1/2 teaspoon oregano or thyme

1/2 teaspoon sea salt



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