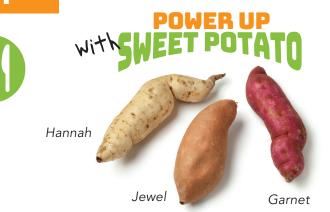## LEARN

facts

- Spanish translation: *El camote*
- Hmong translation: *Qos Liab*
- Sweet potatoes can be white, yellow, red, purple, or orange.
- Sweet potatoes are the part of the plant that grows into the earth and anchors the plant to the ground. This makes them root vegetables.

EAT

POWER UP with SWEET POTATO

Hannah

Jewel

Garnet

nutrition & seasonality

- Sweet potatoes have beta-carotene. Our bodies turn beta-carotene into vitamin A. Vitamin A keeps the tissue that lines the inside of our stomachs and lungs healthy.

  Share with children: Vitamin A helps keep the inside of our lungs healthy.

- Fresh sweet potatoes grown in Wisconsin are available from July through October.

TASTE

taste testing

Cut a raw sweet potato into sticks. You can use a wavy chopper too. Allow children to try the sweet potato, but don't tell them what it is. Encourage children to explore the food.

Ask questions: What color is it? Is it smooth or bumpy? Is it hot or cold? Is it soft or crunchy? Can you guess what vegetable this is? Show the children a whole sweet potato. Explain that you eat it cooked or raw. Share that sweet potatoes grow underground.

— Credit: April Duval, FoodWIse Nutrition Coordinator

Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin!

activity: Growing Sweet Potatoes

Explain to children that sweet potatoes are different from plants that start from seeds. Sweet potatoes start from slips that grow from the eyes on the sweet potato. Show the children a slip, if one was started in advance, or show them pictures of a sweet potato slip.

Tell the children that after the sweet potato slip grows, it is planted in the soil. Today they are going to start a sweet potato slip.

Help children fill a quart-sized mason jar with water, one per child. Leave ½ inch of space between the water and top of the jar.

Give each child a sweet potato and three wooden craft sticks. Write each child's name on one of the wooden sticks with a permanent marker. Help each child push a wooden craft stick into each slip, at least ½ inch into the sweet potato flesh. The wooden craft sticks create a tripod that supports the sweet potato on the rim of the jar. This allows half of the potato to be below the water level and half above.

Explain to the children that the sweet potato grows in the jar like plants outside grow in the soil. Explain that when planted in the ground, the tops of the sweet potatoes grow as vines that cover the ground.

Take the children to the window. Point to the sun. Ask them to think about how the sun feels on their skin (warm). Explain that the light and warmth of the sun helps plants to grow.

Place the jars in a warm location at or above 65°F.

- In about a month, the slip sprouts will grow 8–10 inches, which is the best length for transplanting to the garden.
- Have the children check the jars weekly to see the progress of their slip sprouts.
- Explain that once the sweet potato slips are big enough they will then be planted in the soil outside. The slips need soil, water, sun, and time to grow into sweet potato plants.

— Adapted from Adapted from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Team Nutrition. USDA does not endorse any products, services, or organizations. Provided by FoodWIse.

Share pictures and engage with the Wisconsin Harvest of the Month community by using #WIHarvestoftheMonth on social media.

books

- *Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes* by Yori Tokeda
- *The Gigantic Sweet Potato* by Dianne De Las Casas

GARDEN CONNECTION

planting

Sweet potatoes are started from plants called "slips" that grow from the eyes on the sweet potato. Transplant slips in the garden as soon as the soil warms and all danger of frost has passed. Sweet potatoes grow on trailing vines that quickly cover the soil, rooting at the nodes along the way.

harvesting

Dig the main crop of sweet potatoes around the time of the first frost in the fall. Sweet potato tubers will keep getting larger as long as the weather is warm enough. Cut back the top growth and carefully dig out the sweet potatoes to avoid bruising or damaging them.