



The big debate

Should potatoes be called a vegetable?

Not everyone thinks they belong in such a healthy food category.

What you need to know

- A vegetable is defined as any edible part of an herbaceous plant, like roots, stems, leaves, tubers, or bulbs. They're typically low in fat and calories and high in nutrients.
- Potatoes, which are native to South America, were first grown as crops between 7,000 and 10,000 years ago.
- The most popular types of potatoes are russets (Idaho), followed by Yukon gold, red bliss, and white.
- Americans eat about 28 pounds of potatoes per person a year.



SWEET SPUD
At Idaho's Westside Drive In, a famous dessert called the Ice Cream Potato looks like a potato but is vanilla ice cream rolled in cocoa powder.

When you hear the word "vegetable," you probably think of broccoli, spinach, and carrots—not mashed potatoes or french fries. But according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA, the agency that regulates the nation's food), potatoes are a vegetable because they contain nutrients, including potassium and vitamin C, and are the underground, edible part of a plant. Many food experts, however, say potatoes don't belong in the same group as nutritional powerhouses like leafy greens. They think the starchy veggie should be in the same category as white rice or pasta. What do you think? Should potatoes be called a vegetable?

Yes—they fit the definition

Potatoes shouldn't be blamed for what people do to them, like frying them in oil, showering them with salt, and dipping them in ketchup. Potatoes are still vegetables and are actually good for us when we enjoy them in moderation. They're a great source of fiber, potassium, and vitamins, especially if you eat the skin. And there are many healthy and delicious ways to prepare and eat them, like baking, roasting, and boiling, as long as we don't drown them in butter or sour cream. Potatoes might not be the healthiest vegetable out there, but they're better than not eating any veggies at all.

No—they're not healthy enough

Potatoes are technically a vegetable, sure, but that's only because they don't clearly belong in any other category. The problem is that when potatoes are lumped in with other veggies, like carrots or kale, people think they're healthy and that it's OK to eat them in large quantities. It's not, though! Potatoes have some nutrients, but they're also very high in carbohydrates, like sugar and starch, which can contribute to health problems like diabetes. In fact, nutrition experts at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Massachusetts even suggest skipping potatoes entirely in favor of other veggies.

YES

Three reasons potatoes should be called a vegetable

- 1 Potatoes meet the criteria for being a vegetable and contain key nutrients.
- 2 There are many healthy and delicious ways to enjoy potatoes, such as baking, roasting, and boiling.
- 3 Even if they're not as healthy as bell peppers or kale, they're better than not eating any vegetables at all.

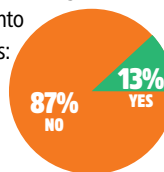
NO

Three reasons potatoes should not be called a vegetable

- 1 If potatoes are identified as veggies, people will think they're healthy and eat too much of them.
- 2 Potatoes have some nutrients, but they're high in carbohydrates.
- 3 Harvard nutrition experts advise people to skip potatoes and choose other vegetables instead.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if we should cut back on recycling. Most of you voted against reducing our efforts to turn trash into new materials: 87% said no, while 13% said yes.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think potatoes should be called a vegetable or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.