

All Eyes on the Potato!

What comes to mind when you think of St. Patrick's Day - shamrocks, marching bands, and green beer? Well don't forget the potato! The potato is the staple food of Ireland, and should be celebrated as well as eaten. First, the facts...

- 🥔 The potato plant is a starchy tuber; the part we eat grows underground.
- 🥔 It has gotten a bad reputation lately with the "low carb" craze, but a person can get all their essential nutrients from just drinking milk and eating potatoes.
- 🥔 The year 2008 was officially declared "The Year of the Potato" by the United Nations to emphasize its importance to world food production.
- 🥔 And most importantly... without the potato there would be no French Fries!

Here are many learning activities you can do with a simple potato.

Materials:

- 🥔 Several potatoes (try a few different varieties)
- 🥔 Simple 2-pan balance scale
- 🥔 Graph paper, crayons
- 🥔 Ruler, measuring tape
- 🥔 Plastic cup, tooth picks, water
- 🥔 Paint, paper, knife, paper plates



How Does Your Potato Measure Up?

- 🥔 *Counting the eyes* – What are the "eyes" on a potato? They are the small indentations where a sprout will eventually grow. Have your child predict how many eyes the potato has and then count. Compare several different potatoes, which has the most? The least?
- 🥔 *Weighing the potato* – Use a simple 2-pan balance scale to help your child visualize how much the potato weighs. Use a familiar object, such as small wooden blocks, to measure its weight. Place the potato in one pan and then encourage your child to count as she adds each block to the other pan. How many blocks will it take to balance the potato? Compare different varieties of potatoes.
- 🥔 *Area of a potato* – Place your potato on some graph paper and then have your child trace it and color in that area. Count how many squares are colored in and help your child estimate the area of the potato
- 🥔 *Length and width* – Finally use a ruler and measuring tape to measure the length and width of your potato. How does it measure up to other types?

Grow Your Own Potato

Fill a cup $\frac{1}{4}$ full of water. Place several toothpicks in a potato and allow it to sit in the cup, with the bottom touching the water. Refill the water as necessary. Watch your potato grow, and eventually you'll have flowers!



Arts and Crafts

Cut a potato in half and then carve a shape into the middle section (maybe a shamrock). Put a little paint on several different paper plates (maybe some green). Potatoes are easy for young children to hold onto and make great natural "stambers"



Finally, eat some potatoes! Kids can help you peel them, chop them, even mash them if you like!