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SWEET POTATOES VS. YAMS: UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY





The terms “yam” and “sweet potato” are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct root vegetables.

Sweet potatoes, native to the Americas, come in snow-white, purple, yellow, or familiar bright orange flesh. Yams are native to Africa and have starchy, dry flesh with rough, brown skin. True yams are rarely found in the United States.

So why is there confusion between the two names? It stems from a historical practice of calling certain sweet potato varieties "yams" to differentiate them from other types.

Today, USDA regulations require that products labeled as "yams" also include the term "sweet potatoes," reflecting the fact that they are technically and biologically not yams at all.

Popular Sweet Potato Varieties:

Beauregard: A copper-skinned potato, is the most versatile of the three sweet potato varieties. When cooked, the flesh of the Beauregard retains its vivid orange color, making it ideal for baking, steaming, roasting and casseroles, and its delicate sweet taste blends with herbs and spices.

Diane, Red Garnet, Jewel: These varieties, with their moist orange flesh are often called 'yams' but are actually members of the sweet potato family. Garnet and Diane are easily identified by their deep red or purple jackets. It is a good choice for pies, breads,, and any recipe which calls for mashed or grated sweet potatoes.

Golden Sweet: The golden sweet, with its cream-colored skin and yellow, somewhat dry, mealy flesh is always labeled "sweet potato." jackets.

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