

Farm to Table with Wisconsin Dairy

Potato Video

Scouting the Potato Fields-

Potatoes are one of the earliest crops to be planted every year in Wisconsin. As potatoes grow, farmers walk their potato fields to check to make sure the plants are healthy and are bug-free.

Pile of potatoes with roots showing-

The part of the plant that we eat is called the tuber, and grows underground.

Field shot-

Potatoes are grown from other potatoes called seed potatoes. Potatoes like sandy soil, and need to be watered, or irrigated often. Potato plants grow red, white and purple flowers that bloom in mid-summer.

Potato plants dying off –

When the flowers wilt, the farmer knows that in 2-3 few weeks the potatoes will be ready to harvest. After the potato vines are dead, over the next two weeks, the skin on the tubers thickens, which keeps them from skinning during harvest.

Digging up potatoes to look at the spuds-

Farmers check their potatoes to make sure the skin is set, and they are ready to harvest.

Potato harvesting equipment –

Many big machines are needed to harvest potatoes. A machine called a Windrower digs the potatoes from the ground and puts them in rows. Then a machine called a Harvester digs additional rows and picks up the windrowed potatoes off of the ground, and uses conveyors to load the potatoes onto a transport truck. Potatoes are harvested from mid-July through mid-October, with the majority of the crop dug in September.

Unloading and sorting potatoes -

Potatoes are then taken to a packing shed or farm where they are packaged or stored to be distributed later. Potatoes need to be sorted by size. Some potatoes are packaged right away, but some are kept in big, cool, dark storage bins to be packaged up to 10 months later!

Potato sorting/bagging/boxing–

Before potatoes are bagged or boxed, they are washed with clean, hot water. Once potatoes are washed and dried, they need to be packaged and transported very quickly to ensure you get the freshest potatoes at grocery stores, restaurants and schools!