



The sweet potato: not just sweet but also in demand



Tipp von Esther Kern



Sweet potatoes grown on home soil? Yes, their cultivation has been booming in Switzerland for several years – and Swiss people are growing more and more keen on cooking the tuber at home. Apparently, we're not alone. US blogs have already proclaimed the sweet potato as the next big thing, following the kale trend.

Not many people know that sweet potato is also a real treat when eaten raw. For example, you can cut them up really finely – in other words, julienne them – and make them into a salad. It's especially good when there is a sweet component in the dressing, such as concentrated pear juice. At the gourmet restaurant Amass in Copenhagen, I had a sweet potato salad in a dressing seasoned with sweetcorn broth, served with baby squid.

If you want to cook your sweet potatoes, the simplest thing to do is to cook them in the oven until crispy. To do this, mix with salt and oil – and add some herbs or spices if you want – and pop them in the oven.



However, they are also wonderful in Asian dishes. For example, I like to use them in an Indonesian recipe, where I cook them with aubergines and tomatoes and then mix together with roasted cashews and fried tofu at the end. Valérie Cavin learned about the sweet potato during assignments with Helvetas, a Swiss development organisation, in West Africa, where they are cooked with onions, palm oil, stock cubes and spices. By the way: the leaves of the sweet potato are also edible. According to Valérie Cavin: "In West Africa, they are sold on the market."

Valérie Cavin and her husband Roman Clavadetscher started growing organic sweet potatoes themselves at their farm in Malans (Switzerland) this year. Simon van der Veer and Christian Hurni are a bit further along in the process – they started experimenting with sweet potatoes in the Seeland (Switzerland) in 2014. "We learned the hard way," explains Simon van der Veer. "For example, the young seedlings are extremely sensitive to light and in the first year, we lost a few plants because of this." Since then, however, he and his brother-in-law have learned a lot and now have the capacity to supply large retailers under their brand batati.ch. A project for crisps made of the Bern sweet potatoes is also in the early stages.

Greengrocer Tiziano Marinello from Zurich also noticed that sweet potatoes are being placed in much more prominent positions in shops: "In the past, they were put in the very back corner in the vegetable section." Apparently, it's not just in the home where we're cooking more sweet potatoes than ever before. Marinello supplies the catering industry and has noticed that: "Sales have multiplied in recent years. I expect that the nationwide boom will start this autumn, especially as many local farmers now offer the tuber."