

Cook your own potatoes

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Do you know the difference between a Pentland Crown and a Pentland Javelin? One of my first Saturday jobs was to know who was who because I used to weigh them, along with Maris Pipers, Maris Bards, Desiree, Romano, Marfona and Wiljas. Ask me 25 years later and I'll still be able to tell you which are best for mashing, roasting, boiling, chipping, and jackets. Each one has a different flavour and texture so you've got to pick the right spud for the job. Yes, potatoes have been a big part of my life and probably part of yours, too – on average, we consume 94kg per person per year in the UK.

The simple spud isn't to be messed with though. If you are going to cook one then you need to know what you are doing, which is why I recommend you visit cyp.potato.org.uk, the website of Cook Your Own Potatoes, a brand new web-based resource site supporting Key Stage 3 Food Technology. This gem of a site contains a generous helping of

recipes, images, videos, and lesson activities, providing you with plenty to cover healthy eating and the role potatoes can play in a balanced diet.

I started by watching the videos by celebrity 'Beer Chef' Richard Fox. There are ten on offer, covering topics from storage, hygiene, peeling, and potato types to slicing, chopping, dicing and tips for cooking sauté, mash, roast, and baked potatoes. To add to these are recipe videos, which follow a predictable 'chefy' format with camera angles and music to match. They are well explained and not overly long but are only four of them, which is a shame, given the versatility of the star of the show. Perhaps in the future more could be done to showcase how potatoes are used creatively across the globe in recipes sourced from far and wide. I thought the interviews with farmers from Perthshire and Cornwall were spot on though, as they explained when potatoes are grown, regional differences and sustainability, choosing a field, crop rotation, how they are grown, protecting a crop, harvest, grading and storage.

The activities on offer are the cream of the crop for me. Topics currently available include Health and Nutrition; and Sustainability; with Versatility and Taste following soon. There are starter, core and plenary activities full of thought-provoking suggestions that include spotting a potato, potato dishes, the eatwell plate, matching diets, and a king of the carbs debate. These can be downloaded as pdf and ppt resources and they are pitched at a sensible level with enough things to do to make the tasks achievable. The only activity to disappoint was the potato quiz. I'm sure this could have been presented with a bit more razzmatazz in a Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? format with pictures, music and more challenging questions. Come to think of it, where were the games, images and additional activities? The primary website has these so why not the secondary?

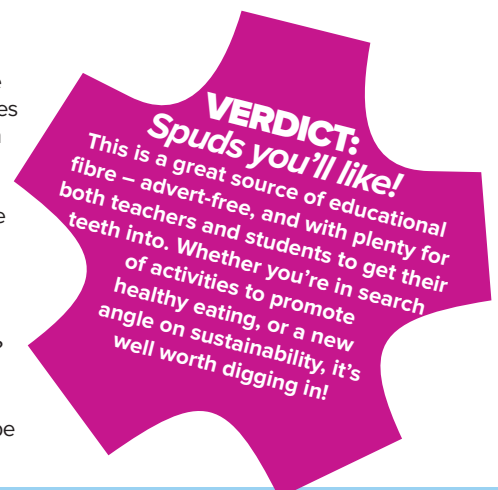
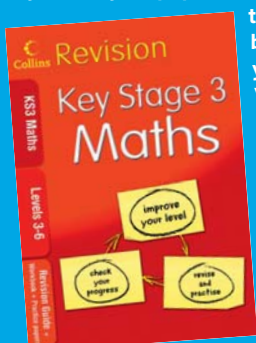
Overall, as a free resource we shouldn't be grumbling, though, because there is plenty



here for you to get creative with to improve students' knowledge and understanding. There's a bounty of facts, skills and inspiration on every page (remember, the skin of a potato contains more Vitamin C than an orange and a sweet potato isn't actually a potato – and did you know that a spud was the original three-pronged fork used by the Irish to dig potatoes?). Moreover, posters are available if you write to the nice people at the Potato Council, and there is a healthy links page to enable you to continue your potato journey into other sites. And of course, it's nice to see chips not taking centre stage for once...

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VERDICT:
Spuds you'll like!
 This is a great source of educational fibre – advert-free, and with plenty for both teachers and students to get their teeth into. Whether you're in search of activities to promote healthy eating, or a new angle on sustainability, it's well worth digging in!