



The **potato** is a [starchy](#) , [tuberous](#) [crop](#) from the [perennial](#) *[Solanum tuberosum](#)* of the [Sol](#)

[anaceae](#) family (also known as the nightshades). The word potato may refer to the plant itself as well as the edible tuber. In the region of the

[Andes](#)

, there are some other closely related cultivated potato species. Potatoes are the world's fourth largest food crop, following

[rice](#)

,
[wheat](#)

, and
[maize](#)

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Long-term storage of potatoes requires specialised care in cold warehouses

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and such warehouses are among the oldest and largest storage facilities for perishable goods in the world.

Wild potato species occur from the United States to [Uruguay](#) and Chile.^[3] Genetic testing of the wide variety of

[cultivars](#)

and wild species suggest that the potato has a single origin in the area of southern

[Peru](#)

from a species in the *Solanum brevicaulle* complex. Although

[Peru](#) is essentially the birthplace of the potato, today over 99% of all cultivated potatoes worldwide are descendants of a subspecies indigenous to south-central [Chile](#)

Based on historical records, local agriculturalists, and [DNA](#) analyses, the most widely cultivated variety worldwide, *Solanum tuberosum ssp. tuberosum*, is believed to be indigenous to the [Chiloé Archipelago](#) where it was cultivated as long as 10,000 years ago.

Introduced to Europe by [Spain](#) in 1536, the potato was subsequently conveyed by European mariners to territories and ports throughout the world. Thousands of varieties persist in the Andes, where over 100 cultivars might be found in a single valley, and a dozen or more might be maintained by a single agricultural household. [\[8 \]](#) Once established in Europe, the potato soon became an important food staple and field crop. But lack of genetic diversity, due to the fact that very few varieties were initially introduced, left the crop vulnerable to disease. In 1845, a plant disease known as late blight, caused by the fungus-like [oomycete](#)

[Phytophthora infestans](#), spread rapidly through the poorer communities of western Ireland, resulting in the crop failures that led to the [Great Irish Famine](#)

The annual diet of an average global citizen in the first decade of the twenty-first century would include about 33 kg (or 73 lb) of potato. However, the local importance of potato is extremely variable and rapidly changing. It remains an essential crop in Europe (especially eastern and central Europe), where per capita production is still the highest in the world, but the most rapid expansion over the past few decades has occurred in southern and eastern Asia. China is now the world's largest potato-producing country, and nearly a third of the world's potatoes are harvested in China and India