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Knowledge is (potato) power

What is Christmas without some form of potato on the table? I grew up in a family that celebrated Christmas with two quite large meals – a braai on 24 December, and a cooked formal lunch on the 25th. In both cases, potatoes featured front and centre, usually as a potato salad at the braai and roasted potatoes at the heavy, but delightful Christmas-day lunch.

Back then, a potato was a potato and there wasn't any indication as to whether it would be good for boiling, baking, roasting or frying. They were carefully selected when our mothers visited the greengrocer and they had to make do for whatever was planned for them. Today, it is a different story – all major retailers boast potato packaging that tells you exactly what that particular type of potato (they don't always indicate the name of the variety) is good for.

Hard work done behind the scenes

It needs to be stated – and it is important that consumers are informed – of the work that goes into determining the ideal cooking methods related to specific potato varieties. This work entails research and actual test cooking of potatoes to determine which method will best feature the variety's attributes on the plate.

Aspects such as size, water content, chip quality, and numerous other traits are thoroughly researched and tested so that the consumer can be informed correctly and spend their money on what their preference is.

Knowing the work that goes into these processes, I was quite disappointed when I

purchased a bag of potatoes from a well-known retailer a while ago, only to find that the "Perfect for boiling" claim missed the mark entirely.

These potatoes were clearly more suited to chips and had to boil for an extra half hour in order to be edible. How on earth was the packaging mis-labelled? And in a day and age where the average consumer truly does not have money to squander on erroneous claims.

Ask the right questions

I have in the meantime learned what the reasons for the 'error' are and that it is certainly not a mistake, but rather an attempt to simply get rid of product. I won't get into this here. In the end, however, it is up to us, the proponents of the potato, to educate and empower consumers to ask the right questions.

Consumers want to be informed about aspects such as nutrition, uses, quality, longevity, etcetera. So, let's do that – let's inform them and empower them with technical know-how. Let's give them the tools to make an informed decision and ask the right questions at the right time.

I hope that CHIPS and its editorial team, along with Potatoes SA, can make a meaningful contribution in this regard in 2023. Until then, gather around the festive table, enjoy the potatoes and other foods we are still able to enjoy, and may peace and prosperity follow you into the new year.

*Lynette Louw, editor
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**SANDSPLEET, SPLEETSKURF
OF ANDER OORSAKE:
OORSIG VAN AARTAPPELKRAKE**

**SANDVELD KULTIVARPROEF
ONDER BESPROEING
OP AURORA IN 2021/22**

Improving diversity
in potato plantings

Use of lime in soil:
Acidity is no longer visible

Reviewed and updated
ARC irrigation manual