

## 6.4 Potatoes and Tomatoes

Sources: <https://www.potatogoodness.com/potato-fun-facts-history/>; <http://www.tomato-cages.com/tomato-history.html>, accessed December 13, 2018

The tomato and the potato were both New World contributions to the global food supply. Before the Columbian Exchange there was no pasta and red sauce in Italy or potato pancakes in Eastern Europe.

The Inca in Peru were the first to cultivate potatoes around 8,000 BC to 5,000 B.C. In 1536 Spanish Conquistadors brought potatoes to Europe. Basque sailors began to cultivate potatoes along the Biscay coast of northern Spain. It took nearly four decades for the potato to spread to the rest of Europe. Today the potato is the world's fourth largest food crop, following rice, wheat, and maize.

Tomatoes had a more difficult time being accepted. The tomato originated among the early Aztecs around 700 A.D. It was introduced into Europe until the 16th century. While it was quickly accepted in Southern Europe, it was rejected in most of northern Europe where people feared it was poisonous.

Wealthy Europeans in that period used utensils made of pewter, which had a high-lead content. Acidic foods caused the lead to leech out into the food, which could result in lead poisoning. Poor people did not have this problem because their plates were made of wood and they tended not to use utensils, so they adopted the tomato as their own.

Attitudes toward tomatoes started to change in the 19th century, probably with the invention of the pizza pie in Naples and Southern Italian migration to the United States. Neapolitans and Sicilians brought their food specialties with them and soon everyone was eating pizza, tomatoes, and tomato sauce.

### Simple Potato Pancake Recipe

**Ingredients:** 3 peeled and ground potatoes; 1 grated onion; 2 tablespoons flour; 1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon baking powder

**Procedure:** Mix all ingredients. Coat 10-inch frying pan with 1/4 inch of vegetable oil. Using a tablespoon, drop in five large spoonfuls as separate pancakes. Flatten. Flip when the outside ring is brown and the center is firm. Remove when both sides are brown. Drain on paper. Serve hot with applesauce and sour cream.

### Simple Tomato Sauce

**Ingredients:** small onion, minced; 2 cloves garlic, crushed; 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes; 2 small cans tomato paste; 1/2 cup red wine; 1 tablespoon salt and 2 tablespoons sugar; olive oil

**Procedure:** In a 10-inch frying pan, heat the oil and brown the garlic and onion. Mix the other ingredients and add. Lower the flame to simmer and leave for 1/2 hour. Serve with pasta.