

Sweet Potato Man Rides Again



3 weeks to go...Progress Report: 55 miles per day but at the SAME WEIGHT !!!
My belly and rear are smaller but my thighs and calves...well... stretch my pants...thank heavens for spandex...

I look at the map each day to remind myself of magnitude the ride...

3800 miles due West...Zephyrs again, yet again, in my face all the way...



On and off I get a little anxious. I think back to last year surviving the Northern Tier, but I am reminded of THE cardinal rule from my former Academic Medicine: “You Are Only as Good as Your Last Publication”... so too do I feel only “As Good as My Last Ride”, now almost a year ago.

Fretting a bit, I run for???

You guessed it...

A crackling, near burnt, sugar peel caramelized, bubbling, hot, baked sweet potato...

Ready for a pad of pure butter...

“Come on now Trans Am!!! Come on now Zephyrs!!! Come on You Appalachians!!!
Let’s Wrestle and I’ll Take You All Down!!!”

... the marvels and benefits of comfort food...

My love of sweet potatoes started only after I finished College. Though Columbus brought sweet potatoes back to Europe, Italians don’t know much about this heavenly food and I never really ate them as a child growing up. My first day of Medical School I was given a free book, a massive tome of tables and charts to be used over the next 4 years. I happened across the nutrition section early on, the only part I could comprehend. I studied the tables out of curiosity and noticed one food which seemed to stand out, to score very high in almost all fields...the Sweet Potato.

Strong in anti-oxidants, anti-inflammatory molecules, fiber, and loaded with carbohydrates of low glycemic index, it is truly one of Nature's perfect foods.

| Sweet Potato, baked 1.00 cup 200.00 grams Calories: 180 GI: medium | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Nutrient | Amount | DRI/DV (%) | Nutrient Density | World's Healthiest Foods Rating |
| vitamin A | 1921.80 mcg RAE | 214 | 21.4 | excellent |
| vitamin C | 39.20 mg | 52 | 5.2 | very good |
| manganese | 0.99 mg | 50 | 5 | very good |
| copper | 0.32 mg | 36 | 3.6 | very good |
| pantothenic acid | 1.77 mg | 35 | 3.5 | very good |
| vitamin B6 | 0.57 mg | 34 | 3.4 | very good |
| biotin | 8.60 mcg | 29 | 2.9 | good |
| potassium | 950.00 mg | 27 | 2.7 | good |
| fiber | 6.60 g | 26 | 2.6 | good |
| vitamin B3 | 2.97 mg | 19 | 1.9 | good |
| vitamin B1 | 0.21 mg | 18 | 1.8 | good |
| vitamin B2 | 0.21 mg | 16 | 1.6 | good |
| phosphorus | 108.00 mg | 15 | 1.5 | good |

Being dirt poor and maxed out on loans for Med School, I signed up for assistance...food stamps. Each Monday morning I would skip Pathology Class to get my much needed help from the Welfare Office and then head down to the grocery store...religiously trundling home with a 10 lb bag of sweet potatoes in tow. Not to worry, I went back at night to study alone in the Pathology Lab.

Sweet potatoes are one of the oldest vegetables known to man. Originating in Central and South America they date back to 8000 B.C. Though they never caught on in

Europe, they thrived in the Philippines, China, and finally in the Southern US. North Carolina, my home for the past 40 years, is the largest producer in America with my county, Nash, the most productive of the State. Every day as I train and ride I pass hundreds if not thousands of sandy acres mounded with millions of these delights.

I never really intended to be named anything in particular last year on the Northern Tier MS Ride but the logo colors (note the shirt above...my bright orange sweat suit helped too) and my co-riders teased me this and that way. At various times I was called "The Great Pumpkin" or "Tropicana Man" but I corrected all by insisting on "Sweet Potato Man". Rick and Fran, with their drawings (see last year's blog), immortalized the name.

So now with the support of family and friends, the Orange Super Hero is about to start yet again. I hope I am up to the task of completing the ride, perhaps at the end with still intact my Dignity and Pride. I know there will be young Invincibles who will be faster, stronger, leaner, meaner, and more brave than me ...so be it...at the end San Francisco will be my prize.

Being being further South this year, maybe I will actually be able to find my favorite tater...Heaven's golden Help... to nudge me 'long the way...