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Propitious Esculent: The Potato in World History

John Reader

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Propitious Esculent: The Potato in World History John Reader
A highly readable exploration of the biology, history and social influence of our most humble and versatile foodstuff.

Baked, roasted, boiled, mashed, steamed, french-fried — the potato is one of the most familiar and ubiquitous foods we have, and part of our sense of humble, mundane normality. But the story of the solarum tuberosum is one of struggle, disease and survival.

Naturally fat-free, potatoes consist mainly of energy-giving carbohydrates, as well as protein and half of our RDA of Vitamin C and Potassium. People have been known to sustain active lives for months fuelled only by potatoes and a little margarine. These bundles of nutrition, which grow safely and cheaply underground in almost any weather and soil conditions, have fuelled industrial revolutions and population explosions. Reader follows the potato's fascinating journey, from its origins and evolution in the Andes thousands of years ago, to its slightly mysterious arrival in Europe where it became a crucial part of the gastronomic and social fabric.

2008 has been designated International Year of the Potato by the UN and, as global population swells and famine remains a constant risk, Reader asks what role the spud still has to play.

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