

Blue and White Potato Chips

Pennsylvania State University shows its school pride – with potato chips

By Dorothy Noble
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For years, William Lamont, vegetable crops professor at Pennsylvania State University (PSU), visualized a line of potato chips sporting the university's colors. Utz Quality Foods in Hanover, Pa., has wanted to partner with Penn State to expand its grower base for gourmet potatoes. Fourth-generation Schuylkill County potato grower John Terwillinger has been interested in projects beneficial to the potato industry. Now, coordinating these interests in a research project, Lamont is seeing blue and white potato chips.

After considerable research and trials, the blue and white potato chip test marketing kicked off during Penn State's football season. The 4-pound box showcased at PSU's Cellar Market enticed blue and white fans on their way to the home games.

Several Cellar Market patrons surmised that the blue chips were dyed. Quickly informed that they were natural, from Adirondack Blue potatoes, they became more enthusiastic. A few noted the purple shading, but it didn't deter their enjoyment. The \$17.50 price, which helps fund the International Association of Students in Agricultural and Related Sciences Club, did not impact the brisk sales.

Half the chips are made from Adirondack Blue. A white chipping potato such as Atlantic, Snowden, Pike, Marcy, Andover or Dakota Pearl makes up the other half of the mix.

Utz Quality Foods, a privately owned family company, has been in the snack foods business in Hanover, Pa., for 80 years. Spokesman Gary Laabs said Utz welcomed the



Surrounded by all sizes of Adirondack Blue potatoes, a bowl of glistening, crunchy and fragrant blue and white potato chips delight not only Penn Staters, but snack food enthusiasts as well. Photo by Bob Ferguson

blue potato's growing and storage characteristics.

"A notable challenge with the blue potatoes that we face is maintaining a consistent blue color late in storage," Laabs said.

Sugars can accumulate, then override the blue pigmentation and cause browning in the chips.

Utz processes blues separately. The lower specific gravity of blue potatoes requires a longer cooking time for chip production. The company has used All Blue, Russian Blue and Purple Majesty. Adirondack Blue gives Utz a deeper, more consistent blue chip without the pronounced white vascular ring



can produce deep blue chips, and generally is higher in gravity than other blue varieties.

As part of Cornell's potato breeding program, Walter De Jong developed Adirondack Blue from N40-1 (Chieftain x Black Russian) x NY96. The seed potato supplier Tucker Farms in Gabriels, N.Y., reported Adirondack Blue to be resistant to golden nematode but susceptible to common scab and silver scurf, and it may be susceptible to seed-piece decay. It yields better than most blue varieties. Released in 2003, Adirondack Blue continues to

