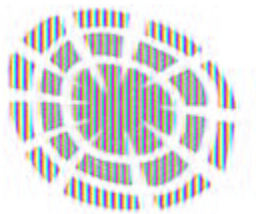


Potatoes: Through the Lens of Colonialism

These are the taster slides!
Get in touch with us at hello@propagate.org.uk if your
organisation would like to host the whole workshop.....



PROPAG
RETHINKING LOCAL FOOD

Where did “the potato” originate?

The potatoes we eat today in Europe are the result of generations of successive hybridisations or wild relatives growing around Lake Titicaca, in the Andean *Antiplano* (a high altitude plateau) of Peru and Bolivia.

It's Latin name is: *Solanum sect. Petota*.



Image credits: cultivariable.com

Ancient Crops

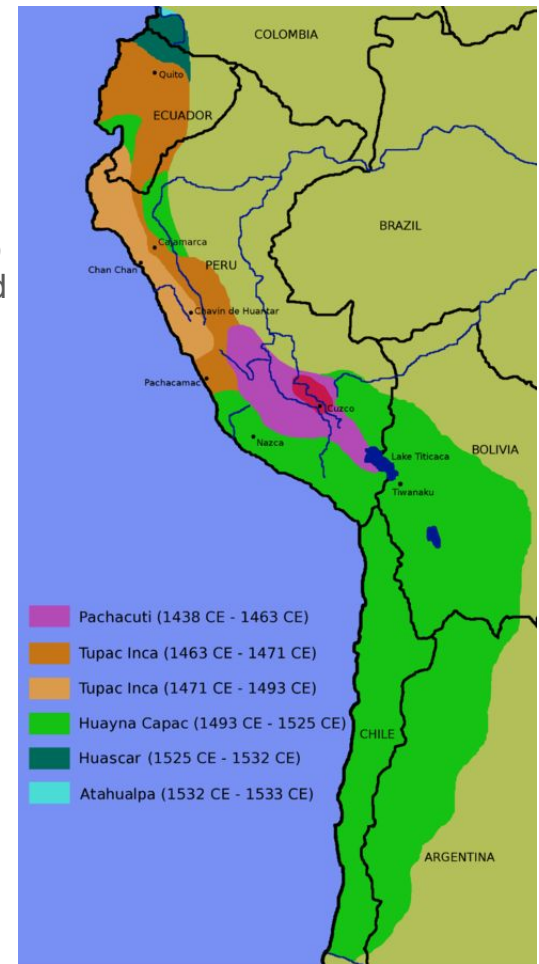


Potato-shaped bottles from the Moche culture (100-800 AD)> (Image credit: metmuseum.org)

- Many people - in Europe, and in South America have attributed the development of the modern potato to the Incan Empire, but their empire only began to rise around 1200 AD, long after the cultivation of the potato.
- The earliest known preserved remains of potato tubers were found in Ancón in coastal Peru, and date back to 2,500 BC, but it's likely that cultivation goes back much further, to between 5,000 and 8,000 BC - up to 10,000 years ago.
- It only took the Spanish around 50 years (1528-1572) to completely obliterate the Incan empire, killing around 8 million people.

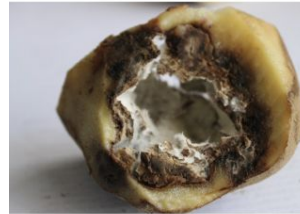


Peruvian potato farmer, image credit: nationalgeographic.com

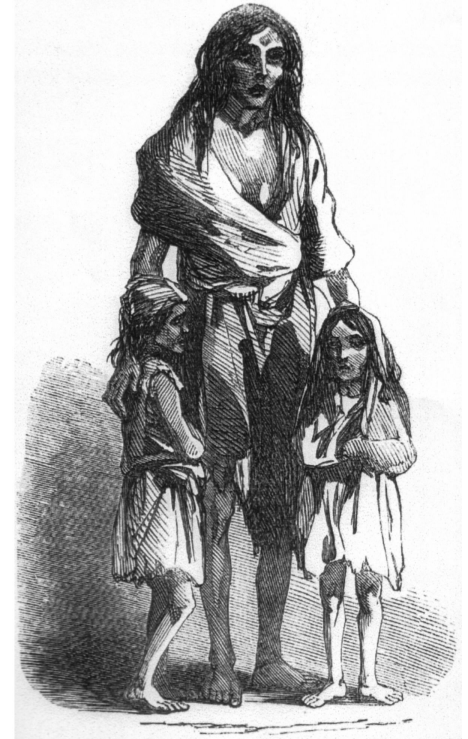


Potatoes arrive to a new continent....

- The first documented instance of potatoes arriving in Europe is of a shipment from the Canary Islands to Spanish controlled Antwerp (now Belgium) in 1567.
- Potatoes quickly became a staple crop of peasants across much of Europe: they require only a little land to produce a nutritionally dense crop, which feudal overlords were largely uninterested in taking, as potatoes are harder to store and transport than grain (and therefore less commercially viable).
- Mass reliance on a single crop for subsistence (while the majority of “better” crops were taken by the ruling classes, and/or shipped out of Ireland), lead to The Great Hunger / *an Gorta Mór* (aka the “Potato Famine”), during which around 1 million Irish people died, and 2 million emigrated - largely to Britain and North America.



A potato infected with *Phytophthora infestans*.
Courtesy of iStock, vector



Group Activities....

We have prepared a range of interactive group activities prepared, that can be adapted to the needs of different groups.

The activities further explore the themes of the workshop, and look at movements of people and food, and highlight just how much the foods we take for granted are the result of centuries (and sometimes millenia) of global movements.

We aim to highlight the many positives that come from cross-cultural contact, but we don't shy away from discussion of the darker sides of the theme - including colonising empires, and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Contact us at hello@propagate.org.uk to organise a workshop!

Thoughts for future workshops in this range....

Where did sugar come from, and where is it grown now?

Which movements of people is it associated with?

