



Want Fries With That?

Don't even bother to ask—the answer is, yes, we do want fries with that. The average American annually eats about 30 pounds of frozen fries, or about four servings of fries a week. And yet, what do we really know about these little golden sticks of greasy goodness. Where did they come from, and how did they get to be America's No. 1 fast-food item?

Some say it was World War I that made fries famous in the United States. The Belgians say it was while American **GIs**, or soldiers, were stationed in Belgium during World War I, that they first got a taste of deep fried potato sticks. But because of poor geography skills, or because many Belgians spoke French, the GIs assumed they were in French territory. So when they returned to the United States, they spoke of the wonderful French fries “over there.”

There is a science involved in making perfect fries. In the United States, the primary potatoes used for making fries are russets. The type of potato is important because its water and sugar contents will affect the outcome at the time of frying. McDonald's is the largest purchaser of potatoes in the United States. McDonald's fries are considered the **benchmark**, the fries all other fast-food outlets try to copy. Millions of dollars and innumerable hours of research went into perfecting the process of cooking, freezing, and cooking again the fries that made McDonald's famous.

Here's how McDonald's makes its fries. The potatoes are aged until they achieve the right amount of water content and the proper amount of sugar has converted to starch. Then they are washed and put through a steam process that removes the peel. Then the potatoes are **frenched**, a term that means to cut vegetables into strips, to about a quarter-inch square. Then they are **blanched**, a process in which food is placed into boiling water for a brief period and then plunged into icy water to arrest the cooking. Then they are dried and **par-fried**, which means they are partially cooked in boiling oil.

After par-frying, the fries are **flash-frozen**, meaning that they are frozen very quickly at extremely low temperatures, packaged and shipped to McDonald's around the country at the rate of about 2 million pounds a day!

It's at your neighborhood McDonald's of course, that the final frying process takes place, in a special computerized deep-fryer that monitors the temperature of the oil and signals when the fries have been cooked to a color as perfect as the Golden Arches. Finally, the fries are salted and served to you piping hot.

Want fries with that? Of course we do!

Originally titled “A Super-Sized Obsession”
by Scott Joseph in the Orlando Sentinel, August 24, 2001.



Dear Parents

Please listen to your child read this article about McDonald's french fries. Perhaps both of you can learn something new about one of America's favorite foods!

TIP OF THE WEEK

Each of the bolded words is followed by a phrase set off by commas. This phrase is called an *appositive*, and in each case it explains the meaning of the word that precedes it. Too often students read through sentences containing appositives without realizing that the definition of a new word has been provided.

The Questions

Use your own words to write a definition of each of the words below. The definition should apply to how the word is used in this article only.

Sample: 30 pounds of frozen fries This is the amount of fries the average American eats in a year.

1. GIs _____

2. benchmark _____

3. frenched _____

4. blanched _____

5. flash-frozen _____

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature