

(This editorial appeared in Idaho Falls Post Register & was reprinted in Lewiston Tribune):

Folks can say pretty much whatever they want about Idaho and the people who live here. Call us rednecks and we'll shrug our shoulders. Confuse us with Iowa and we'll chuckle. Heck, a stranger can even insinuate that we're a bunch of bigots plotting to return the country to 1796 and we'll shake our heads at his ignorance before slapping the poor fool on the back and buying him a bottle of Grape Nehi.

But every Idahoan has a breaking point. We can only be pushed so far. And a study from the Harvard School of Public Health is enough to make the easiest-going Idahoan see red.

The study, released last month and detailed in dubious publications such as USA Today and the Los Angeles Times, dared to besmirch our most treasured resource: the potato. Say the eggheads at Harvard: Eating potatoes will make you look like Fat Albert after a Ding Dong binge. A diet rich in nuts and yogurt, on the other hand, is said to leave you fit, trim and destined to be riding your mountain bike up and down Sunnyside Road until the ripe old age of 110.

This blasphemy attracted the attention of Idaho's politicians, including our unusually fit 69-year-old governor, C.L. (Butch) Otter, a man who enjoys a plate of browns as much as the next guy. ...

It's not difficult to understand where they are coming from. Idaho's economy, already limping along, hardly needs the nation believing that eating potatoes is the equivalent of washing down a box of Twinkies with a 2-gallon liter of Mountain Dew. San Francisco has already banned Happy Meal toys. The last thing the potato farmers in Bingham County or the Rexburg Bench need is for the food police to turn their sights on the spud.

Luckily, our fellow countrymen love the potato. The average American is said to consume 126 pounds of potatoes every year. Plus, the spud is versatile. You can boil it, bake it or fry it. Scalloped potatoes are a necessity at any reputable barbeque. Potatoes work in casseroles, salads and pancakes. You can eat them with or without the skins (fitness guru Denise Austin advises leaving the skins on). Try doing all that with a pistachio nut or cup of yogurt.

And for those smart-alecks at Harvard, there's one more thing the spud is good for: throwing. Fits just right in the palm of the hand. Let one of those Ivy Leaguers come into range and we'll show 'em what we really think of their study. Say what you want about our mommas, but don't mess with the potato