

THE POTATOES' TOMB



The potato is one of the most popular and preferred foods by the majority of people. It is eaten in many different ways: baked, fried, stewed... but the truth is that this food was not always so popular.

The potato reached Europe from America, brought by explorers who discovered these new plants and traded them with the rest of the world. However, the use it was given for a long time was not what you might imagine. The plant was mainly used for livestock, and even when people had nothing else to eat, they preferred to avoid this tuber. Besides all that, the place where this story takes place, France, was particularly averse to consuming this suspicious food.

Luckily, there was a man who saw the potential of this food. His name was Antoine Augustin de Parmentier, a French pharmacist who was also an agronomist and an excellent publicist.

Parmentier, who spent some years imprisoned in a Prussian prison, observed how in that country people were somewhat more open to consuming potatoes, and that part of the population ate them without any problem.

When Parmentier was released and returned to France, he found his country in the midst of a deep famine. Most of the money had been spent on paying for the wars in which France was involved. Besides being a renowned agronomist and pharmacist, Parmentier had the friendship of Louis XVI, who was then the king of France. The monarch listened to the advice of his friend and made some gestures in favor of the potato, thinking that if the nobility was more open to it, the rest of the people would follow suit.

However, at that time, the court was not very popular, so Parmentier came up with a new plan: to cultivate potatoes in gardens in a very crowded area in Sablons (at the foot of the current Eiffel Tower). There, he ordered the royal guards to guard the gardens and their precious treasure, but only during the day. At night, the guards would withdraw and turn a blind eye to all the citizens who came to gaze and steal potatoes. In this way, the potato gained more and more popularity throughout Europe, and thus Parmentier saved France from a great famine.

Today, the achievement of this French agronomist is still remembered, as people continue to visit Parmentier's tomb and leave potatoes on it as a sign of gratitude.



Comprehension Questions



1. Where was the protagonist imprisoned?

2- What professions did Parmentier have?

3- What was his plan to make potatoes popular?

4. What were potatoes used for?

Texto

