



Amazing potatoes

There's nothing like eating a baked potato that just came out of a bonfire. But what if you'd rather avoid all the fire and smoke? There's a very tasty solution

(Photos: Pascale Peretz Rubin)



AN 'EGG-cellent' idea for a stuffed potato.

TIPascale

- When buying potatoes, check that the skin is smooth and flawless. There shouldn't be any green spots, cuts, black spots or sprouts.
- Potatoes should be heavy and solid.
- Store potatoes in a cool, dark and partially ventilated place. Potatoes will ripen (or turn rotten) much quicker if stored in a closed container or plastic bag without any air circulation.
- Potatoes that are meant to be cooked in the microwave and are sold in plastic bags should be stored in the refrigerator.
- If you are preparing peeled or cut potatoes ahead of time, soak the pieces in a bowl of water to prevent them from turning brown.



• Text and photos by PASCALE PEREZ-RUBIN



They're available all year long. They're cheap. They're very filling and are a staple food not just here in Israel but throughout the world. Surprisingly, though, in recent years potatoes have become the enemy of anyone who's on a diet, and many experts claim that we should reduce the amount of potatoes we eat.

But that is just a myth. A medium-sized potato contains only 160 calories, makes us feel full, and does not cause weight gain if it's prepared correctly (in other words, not fried). One single potato contains one-fifth of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C, potassium, folic acid, and vitamin B6. In addition, potatoes are rich in magnesium and minerals and contain only a minuscule amount of sodium. Potato peels contain fiber and antioxidants, and so I recommend preparing potato dishes with the peel intact. Just make sure you give them a good scrub and rinse before cooking.

Potatoes appear on our menus all year long, but there are a few special holidays where they become the star of the show. For example, this past Wednesday night we celebrated Lag Ba'omer. Across the country, people wrapped potatoes with aluminum foil and threw them into their bonfire, where they cooked and became soft. Then the children hurriedly unwrapped them with their little fingers and tried to peel away the burned parts so they could get to the soft interior.

But you don't need to make a smoky bonfire to enjoy the wonders of potatoes. This week, I chose to provide recipes you can prepare inside the comfort of your own kitchen that will remind you of scorched potatoes that are cooked inside a bonfire. There's the potato omelette dish for two, with fresh herbs and red onion; potato wedges in a puff pastry crust; and finally, creamy thyme mashed potatoes.

Translated by Hannah Hochner.

AMAZING STUFFED POTATOES FOR THE BONFIRE

Cut off about 2-3 cm. from one end of the potato and set the piece aside. Using a melon baller or a tourne knife, dig out a hole in the cut part of the potato. Crack an egg in a small bowl and then carefully pour it into the hole. Add herbs, spices and grated cheese if you desire. Replace the cut-off piece of potato on top, and keep it in place with a few toothpicks. Wrap the potatoes in aluminum foil and put them in the bonfire.

Alternatively, if you're cooking at home, use a tray with high sides and set the potatoes in the tray so that they're all standing upright. Bake in a preheated oven set to medium-high heat (190°C) for 90 minutes, or until the potatoes are completely soft. Serve immediately, alongside a dish of olive oil mixed with salt and pepper.



CRISPY, DELICIOUS and nutritious.

CREAMY MASHED POTATOES WITH THYME

This is a very simple recipe that makes an incredible impression when brought to the table. For 6-8 people

- 6-8 potatoes
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- ¼ to ½ cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 5-6 thyme leaves

Preparation:
In salted water, boil potatoes in their skins for 40 minutes until they're soft. Drain them and then mash them slightly with the palm of your hand. Line a pan with baking paper and then lay the potatoes on the paper. Sprinkle a little olive oil, salt and pepper over the potatoes and then add the thyme leaves. Bake in a preheated oven on high heat (200°C) for 25-30 minutes until the potatoes are slightly browned and crispy. Serve hot.



POTATO OMELETTE FOR TWO

The intoxicating aroma from the fried red onion with herbs on the stove top, combined with being baked in the oven, leads to the ultimate omelette that is incredibly easy to prepare. For 2 people

- 3 medium potatoes
- 4 eggs
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 red onion, chopped or sliced thinly
- 2 cloves of garlic, sliced
- ½ cup pitted Kalamata olive, halved or chopped
- 3 sprigs of dill, chopped
- 2 sprigs of parsley, chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 Tbsp. oil

Preparation:
Put potatoes and one egg in a pot with water to cover. Boil until potatoes are tender, but not too soft.
Fry the onion until it turns golden and soft. Add the garlic slices and fry for another minute or two. Pour onion/garlic mixture into a medium bowl.
Peel the cooked potatoes. Slice one of the potatoes and place the slices on a medium plate. Cut into cubes or mash the rest of the potatoes and then add them to the bowl with the onion/garlic mixture.
Peel the hard-boiled egg, cut into cubes or quarters and then add to the onion mixture. Add the Kalamata olives, dill and parsley. Mix together while adding the

remaining three eggs. Season with salt and pepper.
Heat a skillet with oil to medium heat and then add the mixture. Add the slices of potatoes that you'd put aside on top of the mixture. Shake the pan slightly so that the mixture settles, and make sure the slices on top are evenly spaced. Cover and cook over a medium-low flame for 10 minutes until the omelette solidifies.
You can either continue cooking the omelette on the stove top until it browns, or you can stick the pan in the oven for 5-7 minutes, or until the omelette becomes crispy along the edges. Note: Make sure ahead of time that you're using a skillet that can be put in the oven.



POTATO WEDGES IN A PUFF PASTRY CRUST (AKA POTATO PIZZA)

This is the simplest and most interesting potato dish. I came up with this creation when I was trying to find a unique way to serve up potatoes that were sitting around in my pantry. I combined them with some leftover pastry dough that I found in my freezer, and the result was surprising and delicious. Use a 25x35-cm. pan.

- 400 gr. rolled-out pastry dough
- 4-5 medium potatoes
- 2-3 sprigs of rosemary
- 5-6 sun-dried tomatoes in olive oil, cut into thin strips
- ¾ cup sweet and sour (or spicy) chili sauce
- 2-3 Tbsp. olive oil
- Salt and coarsely ground black pepper
- For the egg wash:
1 beaten egg mixed with 2-3 drops of olive oil

Preparation:
Put potatoes in a pot with water to cover. Boil until tender, but not too soft.
Flour your work surface and place the pastry dough on the floured surface. With a rolling pin, thin out the pastry a little and then place it in a pan that is either greased or lined with baking paper. Press the dough against the sides of the pan and pinch the corners so they curl gently. Place the pan with the pasty in the refrigerator for 10 minutes.
Drain the water from the cooked potatoes and rinse well under the faucet. Peel the potatoes, cut them into



LEFTOVER INGREDIENTS equal a new take on french fries.



THE 'ULTIMATE Omelette.'