

yummy Potatoes

65 Downright Delicious Recipes



By **Marlena Spieler**
Photographs by Sheri Giblin



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Acknowledgments

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Potatoes are wonderful

Hearty and sustaining, they are full of potassium and vitamin C, rich with A, B₁, and B₆, with a nice dose of iron and fiber, too. They have only 90 calories on their own and are bereft of any fat—though we all know how alluring a big pat of butter is, when it comes to spuds.

On average, Americans eat 142.7 pounds of potatoes each year. In Ireland, and some other parts of Europe, the average annual consumption is over 200 pounds per head. The Irish, and Scottish, are justifiably proud of their potato-eating ways. With their renowned sweet tooth, the Scots even use potatoes to make a chocolate marzipan-like sweet: simply knead a little mashed potato with lots of confectioners' sugar and cocoa. But Eastern Europe, too, is a potato-eating land. Without potatoes, goulash would just be soup. Without potatoes, Russian pot roasts would just be meat and gravy. And once, in a German market, I thought a potato festival was in progress, as every member of the community seemed to be gathered together in the throes of potato eating. There were big mounds of potatoes, fried with onions; great griddles of sizzling potato pancakes; vats of mustardy potato salad. But no, it was not a special occurrence; this potato festival was simply the weekly marketplace among the potato-loving townsfolk.

Potatoes are able to parlay even the most meager of ingredients into an always-satisfying, often-inspiring meal. Cook them with onions and you transform the most humble of ingredients into Potatoes Lyonnaise. Make a potato soup

with an onion or leek and you have a creamy, homey soup that is a meal. Artist Paul Cézanne's favorite dish was boiled potatoes sprinkled with extra-virgin olive oil and chopped onion. In Peru, one might eat a bowl of earthy lavender-fleshed potatoes, sprinkled with salt, hot pepper sauce, and lime juice. When I lived on the island of Crete, I ate the local *taverna*-prepared potatoes roasted in hot embers, split open, and sprinkled with a dash of wine vinegar and a handful of baby greens, perhaps peas, from the garden or the fields. Such simplicity is delicious.

Or you can lavish your potatoes with great indulgence—fluff them with cream and truffles, roast them toasty brown and splash with extra-virgin olive oil, slather them with aioli, or layer slices with mountain cheeses.

Almost everyone loves potatoes, during good times and bad. Potatoes enhance, they soothe. They are like—well—potatoes are like comfort in a sack. According to a Southwest Airlines *Spirit* magazine survey, mashed potatoes ranks in the top five of America's comfort foods. But I didn't need a survey to tell me that, and you probably don't either; what soothes better than one of a zillion dishes prepared with

potatoes? Even just a plain potato, sometimes *especially* just a plain potato! Eat it in a bowl with a spoon, with slippers on your feet and your devoted cat or pup at your lap, looking longingly toward your spuds.

Potatoes can also be a very neat little weapon in the arsenal of love; in fact, they just might be the way to snap up the object of your affections, captivating your beloved forevermore. After all, who can resist a lover who possesses a magician's way with potatoes? Could you *really* leave someone who makes the perfect garlic mash? Or crusty gratin?

Almost all nationalities eat potatoes. While I expect to find potatoes in Europe, it is in Asia that I'm amazed at how very popular our spud is—in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and, surprisingly, Malaysia, potatoes fill out the savory spicy stews and coconutty curries. In Mexico, potatoes are right at home with local chiles. The Vietnamese love their french fries, and I've eaten crunchy Indonesian fries topped with spicy chile-garlic paste. Yummmmmm. Greeks and Turks serve potatoes in the most savory, cozy long-simmered treats, and even Japan has embraced the potato. I've found "steaks of potato" topped with miso and sesame seeds, creamy potatoes mashed with wasabi, as well as the potato croquette that is ubiquitous in modern, casual Japanese restaurants.

Babies like potatoes cooked until very tender, cut into chunks to grab in chubby fists, or mashed with milk and butter. For some of us, the baby within never goes away; is anything really better than mashed potatoes? Earthy potato flavor, a cloud of creamy, smooth potato fluff—eat it by itself

in a bowl, as a side dish with meat loaf or roasted chicken, or with crisp-skinned sausages for the British classic Bangers and Mash.

And all socioeconomic classes eat potatoes. Peasants eat potatoes. University professors eat potatoes. Teachers, doctors, street sweepers—most eat, and love, potatoes. Great chefs serve potatoes to their well-heeled customers. Diner cooks sling potato hash on their griddles, and fast-food cooks plunge french fries into hot oil with regularity.

Restaurants serve butter-browned potatoes next to the steak or tiny boiled potatoes next to the trout; school cafeterias scoop up a snowy mound of mash alongside the Salisbury steak; bars serve potatoes in savory, snacky ways, such as potato skins; tapas bars serve Potatoes Riojana; and people make potatoes in an unending variety of ways at home.

Having a bowl of boiled potatoes in the fridge is a boon for busy adults—a pot can be cooked on Sunday and get you through a good part of the week's menus: end-of-the-day salads; comforting home fries and hash browns; crisp little roesti, sliced, browned, and sprinkled with a persillade to accompany a steak, or sliced up into a warm salad of frisée and bacon.

Baked potatoes are delicious, especially if you are a kid or a senior, and find mealtime challenging. Pop the scrubbed potato into a medium-hot oven and leave it alone. When it has roasted, after about an hour, its skin is crunchy and darkly flavorful, its insides tender potato goodness, ready to slather with butter, drown with a spoonful of sour cream, and shower with chives. And, for the lavish among

us, might I mention that caviar is a classic addition to baked potato and sour cream, and anything truffled was just meant to be melted into a baked potato; also, if I may continue in this direction, a sliver of foie gras melts decadently into a fire-roasted potato. For healthful simplicity, however, nothing beats a spoonful of yogurt, some chopped onions, and perhaps a sprinkling of paprika and cumin over the top.

Gratins and scalloped potatoes are irresistible, and I defy anyone, regardless of age, to just say “No.” Personally, I could not possibly pass up a casserole filled with the crispy browned edges and the creamy soft potato layers within, oozing cheese and cream, and sometimes permeated with the aroma of shallots, onions, and ham.

Then there are french fries—*frites*, chips, whatever you call them. These sticks of potato fried in hot oil until golden and tender have captured culinary adoration in nearly every land on this planet. Would a hamburger be complete without them? Britain’s national dish, fish and chips, would simply be fried fish without the “chips,” Brit-speak for big fat french fries. (While fish might need chips, chips don’t need fish; consider the “chip butty,” a northern delicacy of white bread, chips, and tangy brown sauce.) Greeks fry potatoes in olive oil, then sprinkle them with salt mixed with crushed oregano. Tunisians make olive oil potatoes and eat them with a hot chile and spice sauce. Israelis tuck them into a pita along with falafel, vegetable garnish, and varied sauces. The Vietnamese are known to toss french fries into a stir-fry, and Bulgarians add them to a meaty stew, while Canadians pile them up and drench them in a meaty wine sauce and a handful of cheesy curds and call it *poutine*.

Basically, though, it’s all potato: a delicious tuber, member of the nightshade family, whose starchy flesh can be cooked hundreds, probably thousands, of ways.

Anyone can have a kitchen stocked with potatoes; they are sold in any grocery. Simply buy a bag when you think of it; they wait on the shelf patiently until you’re ready to cook them up. If you are ambitious, plant a little potato patch—you’ll be rewarded with potatoes that are so aromatic, fresh, and delicious, you’ll find your feeling toward potatoes utterly amplified.

And as enthusiastic as I might be about potatoes, there are others who surpass even me—my husband, for instance. When I mused about writing a book devoted to potatoes, he went out and bought the biggest bag he could, as encouragement. “My Celtic heart skipped a happy little beat when I heard you mention the possibility of a potato book. I thought about all the recipe tasting.”

Note: For those who miss sweet potatoes and wonder where they are; the sweet-fleshed tubers and their yammy relatives are not potatoes at all.

There is simply not enough space between these covers to do delicious justice to both potatoes and the sweet ones!

A Pile of Potatoes

Once, years ago, I was invited by friends to stay at their Dutch countryside farmhouse while they went away. “The place is empty,” they said, “use it and enjoy.”

My husband and I arrived without provisions, hungry, not knowing that it was the start of a holiday weekend, and banks, shops, and restaurants were all closed for the next four days.

We found the keys, let ourselves in, then tried to figure out what to eat. As the shops were closed and our money unusable until we exchanged it, we foraged around the farmhouse kitchen. There were a few onions, some oil, a handful of herbs and spices—ingredients to cook with, but nothing to assuage our hunger. Nothing to make a meal.

As our stomachs growled, and as evening drew, we looked out the window to survey our surroundings. There, across the road, I saw a mountain, or a pile the size of a mountain, of potatoes next to a farmhouse, and no one was home. Everyone in this country seemed to be on vacation.

So—waiting for the cover of darkness—I picked up a few potatoes from the mountain, tucked them into my pockets, and took them home. We ate potato soup, and it was delicious. We slept cozy and well-fed.

The next morning, I thought, a few more potatoes, breakfast potatoes, I can fry them in a pan! I gathered a handful in the folds of my skirt and returned to our kitchen.

We ate the best pan-fried potatoes, enhanced with a handful of sliced onions. I decided on a potato omelet for dinner—I had already met a few pecking chickens on my forays into potato stealing, and as I was living the life of a thief, I followed a chicken and was deliciously rewarded.

And so it went for days, until the holiday was over, the neighbors came back home, the shops opened, and we headed out of town.

I never confessed my thieving ways. I was simply too cowardly.

I did notice, though, that with a pile of potatoes, you’ll never go hungry. And you’ll never really get bored because there are simply so many delicious things to do with them. You don’t need to steal them. You can just buy a big bag—they range from affordable to downright cheap. It’s one of the potato’s most endearing qualities. Okay, some potatoes are exotic and pricey, and suitably wonderful and exciting, but there is almost always a potato for your budget, as well as your tastes.

And once you’ve purchased your big bag of potatoes, you have a meal for almost any time of the day—breakfast, lunch, dinner, or midnight snack—and for almost every emotional feeling and desire.



Potato History

From high in the Andes to the streets of Paris, the fields of Ireland, and the steppes of Eastern Europe, potatoes have flourished and nourished whole cultures whose diets are based on them. Potatoes are now grown in more than eighty countries. There are over a thousand named varieties, about seven hundred in major seed banks or libraries, and many others without names at all, though, sadly, for commercial cultivation there are only about one hundred types.

Potatoes are native to the highlands of Peru in South America and were enjoyed by the Inca peoples in the Andes mountains at least eight thousand years ago. From tiny nut-size morsels to something quite like our own baking potatoes of today, the Incas not only ate a wide variety of potatoes as their staple food but cultivated varieties in myriad colors, shapes, and textures. The potato was everyday nourishment, yet was also regarded as having spiritual qualities.


It is believed that the Spanish conquistadors discovered potatoes around 1537. Some of the earliest European writings about these knobby tubers date from about 1550, and they were introduced to Great Britain about forty years later. Though Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake often get credit for toting them to Britain from Virginia—the potato apparently having arrived in Virginia via Spanish traders who had obtained it from the Incas—it most likely was a nameless Spanish sailor who brought samples of potatoes from the Andes back to his home in Spain. And from there, they worked their way up to England.

The potato was not initially embraced as a food in Western Europe, though. As a member of the nightshade family, its leaves are poisonous, and people were afraid of

the tubers, too. But life was changing and people were hungry; both social and agricultural changes combined to convince people of the potato's inherent goodness. Ireland was the first country to embrace the miracle vegetable. (Alas, as the people of Ireland flourished on the mysterious tuber, so too did they suffer famine when the crops were destroyed by blight, driving a huge migration of Irish to look for a new life in America.)

It was the late sixteenth century when the potato arrived in France. Everyone admired its beauty—Marie Antoinette wore potato flowers in her hair and gardeners planted potatoes everywhere, for their beautiful blooms and foliage—but people were too frightened to eat any part of the plant. You could say they were phobic, no doubt based on the nightshade family connection. Experts linked the potato to a variety of ailments from leprosy to syphilis, from rickets to uncontrollable flatulence. It took a long, long time and a great deal of convincing before it was realized that the tuber, or root of the potato, was safe (and delicious) to eat.

Antoine-Auguste Parmentier was an army pharmacist who had survived on the starchy tuber as a prisoner of the Seven Years' War in Westphalia. From this experience, he



knew that potatoes were edible and sustaining. When the famine of 1770 was wreaking starvation, he decided to convince the population that the potato was not only safe to eat, but it was also a food that could nourish the starving people of France. Louis XVI granted Parmentier the land on which to grow an experimental crop, then Parmentier served his harvest at an all-potato banquet for the royal court, held at the Hôtel des Invalides. From potato soup to potato salad, potato fritters, and potato bread, ending with potato liqueur—I think there were eleven courses in all—the royals were delighted, and eventually so was all of France. Today, in France, the term “Parmentier” is used for any dish that contains potatoes, and there is a street in Paris, as well as a metro stop, that bears the name.

In the early nineteenth century, Greece also had a difficult time convincing the people that the potato was a good thing to eat. The first president of modern Greece, Kapodistrias, had tasted potatoes when he was a diplomat in Russia or on one of his many other European travels. Like Parmentier, he knew the goodness that the potato had to offer the hungry peasants and had a huge shipment of potatoes delivered to the docks of Piraeus. But when he tried to give them away, the peasants were suspicious and ignored both him and his strange tubers. Kapodistrias, however, knew his fellow Greeks well. He had the mountain of potatoes surrounded by a fence and posted guards to watch over them around the clock. Within the week, all of the potatoes had disappeared. Potatoes have been a delicious favorite of the Greeks ever since—and *soooo* delicious, as anyone who has ever forked up a mouthful of lemon potatoes can tell you.

North America got off no more easily. Despite its being a New World food, the potato made its way to the North American table via an influx of Scotch-Irish immigrants who brought the tuber to Londonderry, New Hampshire, in 1719. By midcentury, however, many New Englanders were still convinced that eating potatoes could shorten one’s life. Now, of course, could you imagine chowder without potatoes, or New England boiled dinner sans spuds?

In the British Isles, it wasn’t until the late eighteenth century that potatoes became a staple. The backdrop to their arrival was the change from a feudal society, the increased demands of towns, and disastrous grain harvests. Potatoes were easier to grow than grains, more tolerant of cold and wet weather, and exempt from the grain tax laws. Soon the spud was crowned the food of the poor.

For those who really love potatoes, you may wish to be in touch with CIP, the Centro Instituto de Papas (the International Potato Center), located in La Molina, Peru, near Lima. The institute houses a library and research station devoted to improving sustainable cultivation, preserving and reintroducing disappeared varieties, and supporting research—via potatoes—toward a world with less poverty, more health, and a better environment. A focus for diplomatic personnel, dignitaries, and international visitors, the CIP has a guest house and other facilities for gatherings.

And a note in the modern history of the amazing potato: In 1995 a potato plant was taken into space on board the shuttle *Columbia*, to be cultivated there, making the potato the first food to be grown in space!

About the Potato

The Latin name for the potato plant is *Solanum tuberosum*, which indicates that it is part of the *Solanaceae*, or nightshade, botanical family. This family includes tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers, as well as deadly nightshade. In fact, every part of the plant, apart from the tubers, is mildly poisonous and should not be eaten. Hence the one-time fear of Europeans about eating the potato (as well as eggplants and tomatoes).

Choose potatoes that are the freshest, most unblemished looking. Avoid any that are cracked, bruised, soft, wrinkled, or spotted with green. (If your stored potatoes turn green, cut off all the green portions; if they are very green, discard the whole potato.) When your potatoes are being stored, check up on them every so often. If you find any sprouting taters, bury them in a pot of dirt, pat down, and water gently. Place outside in the sun, and water every day. Shoots will spring from the earth and grow into a plant; when flowers have started to blossom, pull up the plant and dig up the five or six little potatoes resting at its roots. You will be rewarded by the tastiest, nuttiest, earthiest little morsels; few things are more delicious than freshly dug baby potatoes.

Floury potatoes store well; new waxy potatoes do not. In the right conditions, potatoes should last about two weeks; for young potatoes, plan on eating them within a few days of purchase. The exception for eating the freshest potatoes possible is the Italian potato dumpling, gnocchi. They must be made using old potatoes, stored from last year's harvest.

When storing, potatoes should be kept in a dark, dry, coolish (45°F to 50°F) place, unwashed. If they are stored in the light, they turn green and should not be eaten because

of possible varying toxicity, as noted previously. Storing potatoes in too warm a place makes them sprout, soften, and wrinkle. Storing them in too cold a place, such as the refrigerator, tends to turn the starches to sugar and develop an unwelcome sweetness. Also, when stored for extended periods, or if harvested late in the season, the sugar content of the potatoes increases. Too high a sugar content interferes with the potatoes' hearty, savory earthiness and causes them to brown too fast—before they cook through or crisp up—if they are destined for the fryer.

And potatoes do *not* freeze well. If your potatoes are in danger of deteriorating and sprouting, plant them. One of the prized features of potatoes is the fact that you can keep them around for weeks and they will be ready at any time to boil, mash, bake, or fry your way to happiness. Storing works best for baking potatoes. New potatoes are just that: young, tender, fresh. The difference between freshly dug potatoes and those that have been around for a little while is huge, the same difference between out-of-season cold-storage tomatoes and sun-warmed ones straight from the garden.

All potatoes are good, but tasting your way through a wide variety and being a bit picky about your potatoes can

only enhance your spud-munching experience. But take a bite; you should taste bland starch, rich texture, and, above all, a whiff of earth, a taste of fresh damp dirt.

With the hundreds of—no, make that over a thousand—potato varieties available, it's too hard to list all of them. Basically, potatoes fall into three main categories: floury, waxy, and a medium waxy-floury category, called all-purpose, somewhere in between. Potatoes' qualities are determined by the amount of moisture and starch in them. These are what make potatoes floury, waxy, creamy, or dry.

The potato's flavor—like that of other fruits and vegetables—depends upon the *terroir*: the particular soil, climate, moisture, length of the seasons, and daylight hours. Like other vegetables and fruits, a good potato will taste of the land it is grown in. A mediocre potato will taste of very little and will mostly just give a starchy hit.

Long before I learned about *terroir*, I had my own potato epiphany: I dug up tiny new potatoes from just under the soil and cooked them for only a few minutes until tender. They tasted so delicate, so earthy and flavorful, with only a slick of butter melting on top and a green onion munched alongside. The soil, the rainfall, the temperature of the season, had all contributed; I thought I could even taste the personality of the person who had planted the spuds. After that, I paid attention to the farmers' markets for my potato needs and kept an eye open for particularly good spuds.

Look for specific varieties when you buy potatoes, as each potato has different qualities. Ask the farmers at the farmers' market about their potatoes and which are best for your favorite dishes and recipes. Be wary of all-purpose pota-

toes, as they can be good for almost any potato recipe, but not sensational on their own.

Smaller potatoes with a thinner skin are young, new, and waxy, with moist flesh; they tend to keep their shape when cooked. The starch that gives these potatoes their characteristic waxy quality is called amylopectin, much like the pectin in fruits that holds jams and jellies together. Fingerlings, creamers, Pink Fir Apple, La Ratte—all are delicious young potatoes, with a pleasant, almost chewy texture. Young potatoes have a thin skin that you can scrub or rub away; if the potatoes are truly young, the skin will just fall away. Potatoes like this really excel in salad. New potatoes can be really, really tiny; called culls, or marbles, they are tiny little morsels of fresh, fresh potato flavor. If you are at a farmers' market and happen to find these tiny potatoes, treat yourself to a delightful dish: roast them with a little olive oil and rosemary, or boil them quickly.

Larger potatoes are older, with a lower moisture content, and therefore more floury. Often, the same variety of potato can be either waxy or floury depending on its age. Floury potatoes will cook up fluffy, bake up deliciously dry to burst out of a baked potato, and fall apart into soft airy puffs; this is due to their particular starch, known as amylose. Amylose makes gnocchi particularly light and puréed soups nice and creamy, though if boiled, floury potatoes tend to fall apart, especially if cooked that little bit too long. The most classic, tasty baking potato is a russet, but don't think when you walk into a supermarket that if it looks like a russet it will have that same earthy flavor; sometimes supermarkets sell less tasty, more easily and quickly grown potatoes, practical

Potato Products

for business purposes but simply not as richly potatoey tasting as the russet.

Heirloom and lesser-known breeds of potatoes, like Yukon Gold or Maya Gold, are juicy and succulent and good for almost any purpose, depending on their size and age. Truly all-purpose, keeping their shape when boiled, the golden flesh also yields a delicious flavor and sunny color. In Malaysia, I ate tiny, knobby, utterly delicious potatoes, simmered in a soy-spiked savory sauce or a coconutty curry, and in Greece the local potatoes have a white-yellow flesh, very tasty for nearly all purposes. Blue potatoes have a deep purple-blue flesh, and a mineral, earthy flavor. To keep the color in, boil with their skins on and don't overcook; the flesh will be shockingly, delightfully, indigo-lavender. Red-fleshed potatoes are found in the United States and also grown in Scotland; an heirloom, or revived, breed, they taste delicious.

Older potatoes have a thicker skin, as the thickness increases with age of harvest and length of storage. The potato skin is sometimes considered the most delicious part; however, if the potatoes are very old and the skins tough, or if you want to cook a dish of refined potato flesh rather than earthy skin, simply peel them. Some object to peeling potatoes because the skin is significantly higher in fiber and minerals than the flesh. Though this is true, it is such a thin area that the overall amount is insignificant. I recommend that the decision to peel or not to peel is according to your own taste and patience with a potato peeler. If the potato is young, don't bother to peel. If it is an older potato that promises a thick, rough skin, peel then throw either away or toss the skins with a little olive oil and coarse salt, and roast until crispy, crunchy, golden brown.

Dried potatoes from Peru are mountain-dried potato chunks, used by the indigenous people in the Andes. Often, the dried potatoes will be added to a soup, sometimes one that contains several other types of potatoes, one for a floury texture and one waxy, in addition to the chewier mountain-dried ones.

Potato starch is much like cornstarch or arrowroot, at its best for crisp fried batters, or a small amount added to a cake of ground nuts or a torte.

Dehydrated mashed potato flakes may be found in institutional eating halls, dismayingly plain and pasty, but actually, they are not bad at all for making gnocchi as their utter dryness can result in light, light gnocchi.

Frozen—yep. I've seen 'em. But I'm going to pretend I haven't. Unless it's an emergency and you must have potatoes or you will die. Then you can use frozen.

Potato chips. No explanations needed. We all know these naughty, delicious things.

Potato milk is a new nondairy product for the lactose-intolerant. I've heard it's not bad in coffee.

Fats That Potatoes Love

Okay, we know that potatoes are not fattening and that, on their own, you have only 90 calories of fat-free nutrition and delight. However, the truth is also that potatoes *looooo*ve fats. They become luxurious, rich, seductive, and irresistible with fats. Here are some of the fats that potatoes love.

Bacon fat: Don't tell anyone, but slipping a spoonful or two into homemade hash browns or home fries makes them very tasty.

Butter: *Aaaaah*. Potatoes and butter. Melted butter on a baked potato, or a boiled one. Little sliced potatoes sautéed in butter. A buttery gratin. Does life get any better than this? And don't even *think* of margarine. Just don't.

Duck, goose, or chicken fat: The rich fat from poultry is *soooo* yummy with potatoes, conjuring up the flavors of eastern Europe—drizzled over boiled potatoes, mashed with potatoes and onions for a filling for pierogi or ravioli, tossed with potatoes for roasting. Purchase duck or goose fat in a jar, or render your own fat by placing bits and pieces of duck, goose, or chicken in a skillet with a chopped onion and water to cover. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook until the fat renders out of the meat. Remove from the heat, cool, and chill; skim the fat off the top and use as desired. If you're roasting duck, goose, or chicken, spoon off the fat and drippings as the poultry roasts and save it for your roasting or other potato needs.

Lard and beef suet: Used for frying chips, *frites*, and french fries. It is said that french fries are at their best when cooked in horse fat; traditional English chippies are fried in beef suet or lard. When you're eating crisp fries of any kind, there is nothing better than animal fat—with the exception of olive

oil, which makes divine fries. Bland vegetable oils just don't give the true, rich potato flavor and texture.

Olive oil: There is little that's better with potatoes than olive oil, and olive oil is very healthful, too, so you can bask in both deliciousness and well-being. Use extra-virgin for flavor or for stewing and braising, pure or virgin olive oil for frying.

Vegetable oils: Bland oils are okay for some crisp frying such as potato pancakes. Use when you want a crisp edge but no flavor.

Break

I'm a breakfast person. I love my cup of coffee on a weekday, perhaps sourdough toast topped with goat cheese and a handful of herbs plopped down on it, maybe a bowl of oatmeal. But on weekends, breakfast means a big meal, one that might work its way into lunch, or even dinner. When we were children, Sunday breakfast meant a meal like that, seeming to span the day, with a stream of family and friends stopping by to join in.

A weekend breakfast can mean only one thing: potatoes! From hash browns to hash, from home fries to potato cakes to stovies, breakfast potatoes need a bit of a crisp crust, a creamy interior, a contrast of earthy, soft, and crunchy, a kaleidoscope of potato flavors and textures. Breakfast potatoes are divine. They can get you out of bed on the weekend, and get you through the week's drudgery just thinking about them.

Omelets or huevos rancheros, a pile of silky smoked salmon or poached eggs, sizzingly juicy sausages, and crisp crunchy bacon — breakfast 's always better with a mound of crunchy potatoes.

chapter

1

fast

Potatoes

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