

Culinary Outlook

Give a tip o' the hat to potato muffins Don't just say cheese — make it at home

By Aileen Claire
NEA Food Editor

A tip o' the hat to dear old Ireland is in order on St. Patrick's Day. Those not sitting down to a plateful of corned beef and cabbage can make an eating toast to the Irish as they nibble a potato muffin.

The potato, an important part of Irish history, helps create a moist and flavorful muffin to go with lamb or fish dishes. A muffin filled with ham, pineapple bits and walnuts becomes a meal when served with a salad and beverage. Remember: For a light, satiny muffin, do not overmash the potatoes or overmix the batter.



MIX potatoes and batter lightly for satiny, satisfying muffins.

IDAHO POTATO MUFFINS

- 1 large Idaho potato
- 1 cup milk, divided
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon dried dill weed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Bake potato in a 425-degree oven for 1 hour; quarter potato and steam in 1 inch of boiling water for 15 to 20 minutes, or until tender. Peel; mash with 1/4 cup milk. (Should make 1 cup mashed potato.)

In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, dill, salt and pepper.

In a medium bowl, combine remaining 3/4 cup milk, butter and eggs. Make a "well" in center of dry ingredients; add milk mixture and potatoes, stirring just to combine. Stir in cheese. Do not overmix.

Spoon batter into 12 greased 3-by-1 1/4-inch muffin cups. Bake in a preheated 400-degree oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until wooden toothpick in-

serted in center of muffin comes out clean.

Remove muffin pan to wire rack. Cool for 5 minutes before removing muffins from pan. This kitchen-tested recipe makes 12 muffins.

POTATO MUFFINS POLYNESIA

- 3 large Idaho potatoes, pared, quartered
- 1/4 cup warm milk
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 4 teaspoons prepared mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1/2 cup diced, cooked ham
- 1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts

Place potatoes in a large saucepan

with 1 inch of boiling, salted water. Cover. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, until potatoes are tender. Drain.

Mash or beat potatoes with electric mixer until smooth. Add milk, eggs, butter, mustard and pepper; beat until light and fluffy. Fold in pineapple and ham.

Butter four 10-ounce baking dishes; spoon potato mixture into prepared dishes, and sprinkle each with 1 tablespoon nuts. Place dishes on a baking sheet.

Bake in a preheated 400-degree oven for 45 to 50 minutes, until golden. Remove from oven; let stand for 10 minutes. Loosen muffins from sides of dishes; turn out and stand right-side-up on serving plate. This kitchen-tested recipe makes 4 servings.

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(NC)—City dwellers, in the late 1800s in Canada, bought their butter, cheese and other dairy products from small local dairies. As our cities grew into the 20th century, so did the dairies. But the roots of many Canadians were firmly planted in agricultural or rural areas, and in these areas dairy products were made at home.

Now, even with dairy counters in grocery stores crammed with all kinds of products, many consumers are showing renewed interest in home-made dairy foods.

How times have changed! Just as the methods for commercial manufacturing have changed, so have methods for domestic production.

Michelle Marcotte, food consultant with the Food Advisory Division, Agriculture Canada, explains: "The methods have changed because all milk sold in Canada is pasteurized, so that it is safe for consumption and has a longer storage life. Also, the availability of new kitchen equipment has updated techniques for several products. For example, buttermaking, and ice cream and yogurt production can be simpler using the new kitchen equipment available".

Food Advisory Division's food consultants and technicians recently have developed practical and reliable methods of preparing butter, crème fraîche, ice cream, sour cream, cottage cheese, ricotta cheese, and yogurt for a new publication. Most of the equipment required is quite common — but for many products a thermometer is required.

Ricotta, the Italian cousin of cottage cheese, has a creamy texture and slightly-acid taste. While cottage cheese is made from skim milk and buttermilk in a long process that allows for a slow development of flavor, ricotta cheese is made from whole milk and vinegar in a fairly-fast, easy process.

Even though the publication has not yet been released by Agriculture Canada, Marcotte has given us the method to make ricotta cheese, and a recipe that uses this tart, fresh cheese in an appetizer spread.

For this recipe, you need a thermometer, colander, and cheesecloth.

Ricotta Cheese

- 2 L. whole milk
- 50 mL vinegar
- Scald milk to 85°C. Remove from heat, and add vinegar. Let stand at room temperature for five hours.
- Line strainer with four layers of cheesecloth, then pour boiling water through cheesecloth. Drain ricotta cheese through strainer.
- Let drain for one hour, 15 minutes. Refrigerate in a covered container.



ABOUT NUTRITION
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Makes about 500 mL.

Ricotta cheese can be used to prepare several dishes including lasagna, manicotti and ravioli. Properly seasoned it can also garnish fresh fruit. The recipe here uses it as a spread for crackers or bread.

Ricotta Spread

- 250 mL ricotta cheese
- 25 mL mayonnaise
- 25 mL finely chopped onion
- 15 mL finely chopped stuffed olives
- 5 mL dried parsley
- 1 mL Worcestershire sauce
- 0.5 mL garlic salt
- 0.5 mL cayenne pepper
- Combine ingredients and blend well. Store overnight before serving. Makes about 250 mL.

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Make clam chowder from scratch

By Aileen Claire
NEA Food Editor

The microwave can turn the chore of making a clam chowder into a snap. Clams — and mussels — are

MICROWAVE COOKING

now more available in supermarket fish departments. With your microwave, you can create a homemade Manhattan-style clam chowder that your family will look forward to as a weekly treat.

Opening fresh clams can be time-consuming and tricky for those not born to the shore life. Use the microwave to zap open clams or mussels for use in this recipe. You may use canned chopped clams if fresh ones are not available.

- Dash each: pepper and bottled hot pepper sauce
- 1 14- to 18-ounce can whole tomatoes, chopped, including liquid, not drained
- 1/4 cup minced parsley

Scrub clams with a brush under running water. Discard any that do not close when tapped.

Place half the clams in a single layer in a microwave-safe shallow dish. Cover with plastic wrap. Microwave on High for 2 minutes. Let stand, covered, for 1 minute. Remove open clams. Continue microwaving for 30-second periods until all have opened.

Repeat with remaining clams. Let cool and remove from shells. Coarsely chop if large. Strain and reserve juice. If using canned clams, drain and reserve juice.

Combine carrot, onion, celery, garlic and olive oil in a 2-quart glass measure; stir to coat vegetables. Cover with plastic wrap. Microwave on High for 4 minutes. Stir in potato, peppers and seasonings; microwave on

High for 5 minutes.

Add water to reserved clam juice to equal 2 cups. Add to vegetable mixture with clams and tomatoes. Microwave, covered, on High for 8 minutes, stirring halfway through. Let stand, covered, for 3 minutes.

Remove bay leaf and add parsley. Correct seasoning. This kitchen-tested recipe makes 4 to 6 servings.

Manhattan Mussel Chowder Variation: Substitute 2 1/4 pounds mussels for the fresh clams. Scrub as above, scraping off beards. To open, microwave on High for 1 1/2 minutes and continue recipe as for clams.

FOOD



Aileen Claire

- ### MANHATTAN-STYLE CLAM CHOWDER
- 3 pounds littleneck or steamer clams, or 2 8 1/2-ounce cans chopped clams
 - 1 cup diced carrot
 - 1/2 cup diced onion
 - 1/4 cup sliced celery
 - 1 clove garlic, minced
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 1 cup diced potato
 - 1/4 cup diced red or green bell pepper
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 1/4 teaspoon each: dried thyme and basil

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