

The great mashed potato debate

With the exception of turkey, mashed potatoes rule during the holiday season. But when it comes to the method (or art) of making them, that's where the agreement ends and the debate begins.

Everyone has their own version of the quintessential mashed potato, and the discussion starts with which variety is best. In fact, it depends on what you prefer. According to www.OntarioPotatoes.ca, for light, fluffy, slightly mealy mashed potatoes, use a high-starch variety, such as the Russet. For smooth and creamy mashed potatoes, use a high-moisture variety such as Yukon Gold.

The question then is: Skin or no skin? Boiled or roasted? For a classic mashed potato, peel and boil potatoes. If you're after a more rustic presentation, leave skins on and roast before mashing. If boiling, a common next step is to place the potatoes back into the pot after draining and then heating them to burn off the excess water, essentially drying them out. Many don't feel this is a required step, while others feel this allows the milk, cream and/or butter to absorb into the potato more easily.

What tool is best to mash with? Well, is your preference lumpy or smooth? While some prefer the extra creamy and smooth version by using a food processor or electric mixer, essentially whipping them, others find this too adventuresome, worried that the aggressive action will create a sticky, gooey mess. A ricer provides the smoothness without the fear. For a mashed potato with a rougher texture, the preference is for a classic hand-held masher or even a simple fork.

Next come the additional ingredients. According to one source, one may mix in milk, cream, butter, vegetable oil and even

cheese. A French variation adds egg yolk for Pommes duchesse that is then piped onto a baking sheet and lightly browned.

And finally, the flavourings. These can range from garlic, horseradish, herbs and spices to even wasabi.

—News Canada

Flavour your mashed

Add variety to classic mashed potatoes by adding your favourite flavour. Here are just a few:

- **Horseradish-Mash:** Add 1 tbsp (15 mL) prepared horseradish and chopped parsley to prepared mash.

- **Garlic-Mash:** Squeeze one roasted garlic bulb into mash (To roast garlic: rub garlic bulb with olive oil and place on a small baking sheet; bake in 400°F oven 45 minutes).

- **Wasabi-Mash:** Roast garlic as above and squeeze softened garlic cloves into bowl; mix with 1-1/2 tsp (7 mL) wasabi powder and just enough water to form a thick paste. Add to mash.

Leftover mashed potatoes are a convenience cook's secret weapon.

- Mashed potatoes are ideal for thickening soups and sauces.

- Make Shepherd's Pie.

- Dip mashed potato patties into beaten egg and bread crumbs, refrigerate for an hour, and fry until crispy. Beat in herbs, seasonings, roasted garlic, minced vegetables, or grated cheese for added flavour and colour

- Use them as a substitution ingredient in your favourite baking recipe—mashed potatoes (before butter, cream and other ingredients are added) can substitute for high-fat ingredients. More great substitution tips are available online at www.OntarioPotatoes.ca.

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