

Irish Colcannon Potatoes

My first experience with this classic Irish dish was at a pub in a small, seaside village in Ireland back in the 1990s when I was a cruise director with Clipper Cruise Line, and every time I make it I am instantly transported back to that day. This is a hearty side dish that can also be served as a main course, featuring mashed potatoes combined with carrots, cabbage, scallions, butter, cream and – wait for it - bacon.

I use Yukon Gold potatoes for this recipe, as they have a wonderfully smooth and creamy texture that elevates the entire dish. Good butter is key to this recipe, so if you are looking for an excuse to spring for a block of Kerrygold Irish butter, this is it.

Ingredients:

3 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, boiled

1½ cups milk

4 tablespoons (half a stick) butter (Kerrygold is especially good in this recipe)

4 slices bacon, diced

2 cups white cabbage, shredded

1½ cups kale, roughly chopped

1 bunch scallions, cut into ¼-inch slices

½ cup red cabbage, shredded

1 large carrot, cut into julienne strips

Kosher salt

Black pepper

To garnish:

2 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

Directions:

In a large pot, boil the potatoes for about 30 minutes until fork-tender. Drain the water and return potatoes to the pot. Continue to cook over medium-low heat for about 3 minutes, to remove any excess moisture. Remove from heat.

As the potatoes cool slightly, warm the milk and butter in a small saucepan until the butter is completely melted, then remove from the burner and set aside. Once the potatoes are just cool enough to handle, use a ricer to puree the potatoes into a large bowl. The ricer will Add the milk and butter mixture and use a spatula or wooden spoon to blend together.

In a sauté pan, cook the diced bacon over medium heat until crispy. Drain the grease, leaving 2 tablespoons in the pan. Add all the vegetables to the pan and cook in the bacon fat over medium heat until soft and tender.

Add the cooked vegetables and bacon to the mashed potatoes and mix thoroughly with a spatula or wooden spoon. Add 2 teaspoons kosher salt and 1 teaspoon black pepper to start, then taste and adjust seasoning as desired. Stir to combine.

Serve in a large bowl, and garnish with several pats of good butter on top.

Sarah's Tip

- Using a ricer will produce a uniform texture of smooth and fluffy potatoes (a masher could leave the potatoes lumpy, overworked or gummy).

Irish Steak and Stout Hand Pies

My Irish Steak and Stout Hand Pies made their debut in this column five years ago, and they were an instant hit with my family and our readers. These charming hand pies feature a savory blend of beef, bacon, onion, carrots and potatoes, and a splash of Guinness to make them truly Irish. I use my [all-butter pie crust](#) for this recipe but store-bought pie crust will also work well.

Makes: 6 to 8 hand pies

Ingredients:

1/3 cup all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons kosher salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 pound beef chuck shoulder, excess fat trimmed, cut into half-inch cubes

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

3 strips bacon, diced into small pieces (thumbnail size or smaller)

1 small yellow onion, diced (about 2 cups)

1 celery rib, diced into ¼-inch pieces (about ½ cup)

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, finely chopped (1/2 teaspoon dried)

3 large garlic cloves, minced

1 cup beef stock

2 small carrots, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)

1 to 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)

1/3 cup Guinness Irish Stout or other dark beer

2 pie crusts, homemade or store-bought

Egg wash:

1 egg

1 tablespoon milk

Directions:

In a shallow dish, combine the flour, salt and pepper. Add the beef cubes and toss until evenly coated, shaking off any excess flour; discard the flour when done.

Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chopped bacon and cook for 2 minutes, then add the floured beef and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned on all sides, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove meat from pan and set aside.

Lower heat to medium and add the onion, celery, thyme, garlic and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Cook until soft and lightly golden, stirring often, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add more oil by the teaspoon if needed.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, bring the beef stock to a boil, then reduce to a gentle simmer and add the carrots and potatoes. Cook until tender, about 7 to 8 minutes. Transfer vegetables to a heatproof dish and reserve the stock for use in the filling.

Once the onions are golden and tender, use a wooden spoon to stir in the Guinness and scrape up all the browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the reserved beef stock and stir to combine.

Add the browned beef cubes, carrots and potatoes, and cook over medium-low heat, stirring often, until the liquid reduces and thickens into a gravy, about 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool until just warm or room temperature.

To assemble the hand pies:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Use a knife or mold to cut each pie crust into 6-inch circles and place them on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Gently shape leftover scraps into a disk and roll out again until completed. Refrigerate for 10 minutes to firm up the dough before assembling the pies.

Place 1/3-cup of the beef filling in the center of each circle. Use your fingers to smooth cold water over the edge of the upper half of each circle. Fold the bottom half up to meet the top to form a semi-circle, pressing gently, then press a fork all along the edge to seal each pie. For best result, refrigerate for 10 to 15 minutes before baking.

In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and milk until frothy. Remove the pies from refrigerator and brush the top of each with the egg wash, covering completely. Gently poke a fork in the center of each pie to allow steam to escape. Add a sprig of fresh thyme or sprinkling of herbs to garnish, if desired.

Bake until the crust is a rich, golden brown, about 20 to 25 minutes. Serve immediately. Leftover pies may be refrigerated for several days, or frozen for up to 3 months.

To store:

These hand pies can be frozen either baked, or unbaked. Baked pies can be reheated at 300 degrees until hot. For unbaked pies straight from the freezer, bake at 400 degrees for 50 to 60 minutes. If freezing unbaked pies, be sure to poke the air holes in before freezing, but don't apply the egg wash until just before baking.

Irish Cream Cheesecake

This Irish Cream Cheesecake was a popular dessert at our former restaurant, Sarello's, and it was just as big a hit when I shared the recipe here in 2014. Our friend (and former employee), local chef Ben Walker, helped to refine the recipe by sharing his best tips for cheesecake success. This is the perfect finale this traditional Irish feast, and the alcohol in the Irish cream liqueur will cook off completely as the cheesecake bakes so that lads and lasses of all ages can enjoy a slice.

Serves: 10 to 12

Crust Ingredients:

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups finely crushed Oreo cookies (about 20 whole cookies)

6 tablespoons butter, melted

Filling Ingredients:

1 cup granulated sugar

3 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened

4 large eggs

$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Irish Cream liqueur

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mini real semi-sweet chocolate chips, divided

1 teaspoon all-purpose flour

For the Crust:

Pre-heat oven to 375°F. Place the cookies in a food processor and mix until finely grounds. In a medium bowl, combine the crushed cookies with butter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

Lightly coat the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray and line with parchment paper. Press the mixture into the bottom and about 1-inch up the sides. Bake for 6 to 7 minutes. Set aside. When the pan is cool, line the outside with aluminum foil to prevent the water bath from leaking inside.

For the Cheesecake:

Pre-heat the oven to 325°F.

Using the paddle attachment of your mixer, combine the sugar and cream cheese and beat at medium-high speed until creamy, about 3 to 5 minutes. Taste, and if the texture is grainy, gritty or lumpy, keep mixing until smooth.

Continue beating and add the eggs one at a time, until just incorporated. DO NOT OVER BEAT. Stir in the liqueur by hand.

In a small bowl, stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chocolate chips and one teaspoon flour; gently stir into the cream cheese mixture. Pour the batter into a spring-form pan and sprinkle the remaining chips over the batter.

A water bath is recommended to ensure the cake is evenly cooked all the way through. To prepare, use a pan large enough to contain your baking pan (like a roasting pan), and fill with one inch of water. Place the cheesecake pan in the center.

Bake at 325°F for one hour or until center is set and firm to the touch. (Cheesecake surface may be slightly cracked.) Cool for 30 minutes. Cover pan or transfer to airtight container and refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving, overnight is even better.

To Store:

Place in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 4 days. Do not freeze.

Sarah's Tips:

- Use the entire Oreo for the crust – there is no need to remove the cream filling.
- The alcohol cooks off during the baking process, so kids of all ages can enjoy this cheesecake.
- All cheesecake ingredients should be at room temperature before starting.
- Once the batter is ready, firmly tap the bottom of the mixing bowl against the counter several times to remove any air bubbles. This helps to prevent the cake from cracking.