

Cheddar and Chive Duchess Potatoes

Makes: 12 individual portions, serves 6 to 12

Ingredients:

3 pounds Yukon Gold or Russet potatoes, peeled and quartered

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

1 clove garlic, peeled and root end trimmed (optional)

¼ cup whole milk or heavy cream

¼ teaspoon finely ground black or white pepper

½ cup white cheddar cheese, finely grated (Gruyere, mozzarella or other semi-hard cheese also good)

1 tablespoon fresh chives, finely chopped

Pinch of ground nutmeg

4 large egg yolks

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Fit a large piping bag with a large, open-star tip and set aside (you may also use a large round tip or a plastic freezer bag with the end cut off).

Place the quartered potatoes in a large pot with 1 tablespoon of the kosher salt. Fill the pot with water until it reaches one inch above the potatoes. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to medium-low and simmer until the potatoes are tender enough for a fork to pierce through with ease (no resistance), about 16 to 18 minutes.

Once fork-tender, drain the potatoes into a colander and place the empty pot back on the stove over medium heat. Melt 3 tablespoons of the butter with the whole garlic clove. Once the butter has melted, continue to cook for 2 minutes, then remove and discard the garlic clove.

Add the heavy cream or milk, the remaining teaspoon of kosher salt and the black pepper; bring to a simmer over medium heat then turn off the heat. Pass the warm potatoes through a ricer directly into the milk mixture or use a potato masher to mash them in until smooth.

Add the cheddar cheese, chives and nutmeg, and use a stiff rubber spatula or wooden spoon to stir until melted. Taste the mixture and add more salt and pepper as desired. Add the egg yolks, one at a time, stirring vigorously after each addition until well-incorporated.

Transfer the potatoes to the piping bag fitted with the star tip until $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Place the piping bag on a firm surface and use the side of your hand to smooth the potatoes down toward the end to remove any air pockets.

Pipe the potatoes into swirled mounds approximately 2 inches wide and 2 inches high, tapering the width with each upward swirl. Space each mound 1-inch apart. *At this stage, you can refrigerate the unbaked potatoes in an airtight container for up to 3 days or freeze them for up to 3 months.

Melt the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter and then use all of it to generously brush the tops and sides of the potatoes.

Bake until the swirls on the potatoes are golden brown and crispy, about 20 minutes, depending on your oven. Check after 15 minutes – if the tops are turning brown too quickly, reduce heat to 400 and continue baking until done. (My tops are always darker than the sides.) Remove from the oven and serve immediately.

Sarah's Tips:

- Baked Duchess potatoes may be stored in an airtight container and refrigerated for up to 3 days, then reheated in the oven at 375 degrees until hot.
- To freeze unbaked Duchess potatoes, pipe them onto the baking sheet and place the sheet in the freezer for 2 hours, or until hard to the touch. Transfer the potatoes to a freezer bag or airtight container and freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight and bake as directed.
- Duchess potatoes are versatile: for a plain version, skip the garlic, cheese and chives, or swap them out for your favorite cheese and herbs.
- Save the egg whites to use in other recipes, like my Coconut Macaroons, Meringue Kisses and Angel Food Cake, or omelets.