

Smooth, Creamy, Mashed Potatoes Because I Guess We Must

Serves 8–10

Ask me for “the best mashed potato recipe,” and well, it might be this one. “To me, you are perfect.” There is a tight, concise ingredient list, all of which pull their weight: Yukon Gold and russet potatoes for creaminess and starchiness (respectively), buttermilk to keep them light and tangy (this is “the secret ingredient”), heavy cream for fat, butter for flavor. The smashed garlic is optional—I think the nuance of the garlic is likely lost in the context of “a full Thanksgiving plate,” but eaten on their own, it’s an excellent add—but do not go light on the freshly ground black pepper.

While I prefer to simply mash my potatoes with a wooden spoon, many people will try and over complicate this dish by telling you you need a ricer or food mill to get the potatoes **TOTALLY LUMP-FREE, SMOOTH AND CREAMY**. I will say, no amount of lump reduction is worth me buying, using, cleaning a food mill or ricer, because regardless, the potatoes will always have residual lumps (I’ve tried). These are mashed potatoes. Let them be mashed!

Ingredients

2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks

2 pounds Yukon Gold or other creamy potato, peeled and cut into large chunks

Kosher salt

1½ cups heavy cream

1 cup buttermilk, whole milk, or 2% milk

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, plus more for serving

4 garlic cloves, smashed (optional)

Freshly ground black pepper

Instructions

- 1 Place potatoes in a large pot, and cover with about 2” of salted water (salted like you’re making pasta). Bring them to a boil, and cook until all the potatoes are completely softened and tender (test one with a fork—it should be easily smashed), 15–20 minutes (I have a small burner, and it takes a while; if you have a large burner, it will not take as long). For what it’s worth: If you’re picking between overcooking and undercooking, I say overcook here (undercooked bits = lumps that never soften).
- 2 Meanwhile, combine the cream, buttermilk or milk, butter and garlic (if using) in a medium pot, and season with salt and lots of black pepper. Bring to a simmer, letting the butter melt and garlic infuse, then remove from heat; set aside.
- 3 Drain potatoes, letting them sit in the colander for a few minutes, tossing them occasionally to really encourage every drop of moisture to escape. Want to use a ricer? This is your moment: Rice away, ricing back into the pot from which they came. If you’re simply using a wooden spoon or masher, return the potatoes to the pot from which they came, and, using the back of a wooden spoon/wooden-spoon-like implement/proper masher, smash/crush the potatoes until they’re the desired lumpy or lump-free texture (I prefer lumps!).
- 4 Regardless of how you riced or mashed or crushed, we end up with a pot of potatoes, which is fine but unremarkable. Here’s where they become delicious. Remove the garlic from the pot, then pour the hot cream mixture over the potatoes and mix until well blended, but not gloopy or gummy. Season again with salt and pepper before transferring to a serving bowl and topping with another pat of butter (or 3).

DO AHEAD: A helpful thing my mom would do is peel and cut the potatoes the night before and store them in the pot of salted water (don’t even have to refrigerate). Other than that, don’t make mashed potatoes in advance if you don’t have to! Potatoes continue to absorb liquid as they sit, so if you make these the day before, you’ll certainly have to add more liquid when reheating, which is fine, but will be a different texture. Just make them a few hours before dinner, keep them on the stove, and rewarm when you’re ready to eat.

LEFTOVERS: Warm in a pot with a splash of cream, buttermilk, or milk (water also works!) over low heat—be careful of scorching. Fry in oil in a non-stick skillet till crispy, like a pancake. Eat cold out of the container (weirdly good, like potato salad?).

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