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TASTE

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2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Spuds are simply smashing any way

The word "potato" itself derives from the Spanish *patata*, which in turn comes from the Caribbean word *batata*, meaning sweet potato. Americans have for many years referred to white potatoes as "Irish potatoes" even though their point of origin is not Ireland.

Many centuries ago Indian tribes living along the western coast of South America were feasting on the many wild varieties of potatoes. The Incas of Peru were growing and eating potatoes 2,000 years before Columbus discovered America.

Potatoes were carried back to Europe in the early 16th century by the Spanish ships coming from the New World. They were not well received by most of Europe and especially France where they were believed to be poisonous. However, in Ireland, they soon became the main food crop. Potatoes were eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner. After the potatoes long journey from the Americas to Europe they came back to this country from Ireland with the settlers.

Vegetable friend

Speaking from a culinary standpoint, they are one of a chef's best vegetable friends. Virtually any cooking method can be applied to potatoes—steaming, sauteing, deep frying, boiling, baking, roasting, grilling and even microwaving (if you must). Truth be told most of us only order all that other stuff to get to spuds anyway don't we? For years the potato has taken a back seat to make room for sexy, posh, trendy starches such as the million new grain sides we see in restaurants—quinoa, cous-cous, fun-shaped pastas, bistro risottos etc. I say pass the spuds!

The matriarch of comfort food, mashed potatoes is my personal favorite way to prepare spuds... I mean mashed with anything! Try mushrooms, artichokes, the old favorite garlic mashed or three cheese. The possibilities are truly endless. Some basics for the perfect mashers are as follows: Bring a pan with water covering potatoes to a boil, then reduce to a simmer until the potatoes are fork tender (15-20 minutes). Drain the water off and place the potatoes back on the stove or in the oven. Evaporating the excess moisture from the potatoes helps to ensure a fluffy and result.

The actual mashing of cooked potatoes requires ones own discretion. Some chefs hand prefer passing potatoes through a ricer or food mill, while others (myself included) find a hand masher or wooden spoon the instrument of choice. Food processors are not a great idea for mashing potatoes since the sharp blade will completely denature the starch granules causing them to seep glutinous matter which makes for a slushy mash. A good rule of thumb to follow for basic mashed potatoes is 2 pounds of potatoes to 1 cup of liquid to 6 tablespoons of butter. Don't forget that potatoes are best mashed when hot. Once they are cooled, the desired moistness is never to be regained. The mashed potato has in a way become a new canvas for culinary expression. Just about any combination in the realm of taste is fair game. Be creative and "Happy Mashing."

Spud stuff

- Did you know?
- There are more than 200 varieties of wild species of spuds?
- Potatoes were and still are used for medicinal purposes.
- One 5.6 ounce potato has 120 calories, no fat, 6 mg of sodium, 2 g of fiber, 27 g of energy, 14 g of starch, 3 g of protein and 40 percent of the daily requirement of vitamin C.
- Potatoes stay good for several weeks.
- Approximately 120 pounds of potatoes per capita per year are consumed.
- Potatoes are the edible portion of the starchy tubers of the potato plant, *Solanum tuberosum*.
- The English grew potatoes only as ornamental plants.
- Before the early 1800s many people in Europe believed potatoes to cause leprosy, scrofula, syphilis and provoked unbridled lust.
- Prussian peasants refused to eat potatoes even in times of great famine.

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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Irish food and Guinness
- Tex-Mex Macaroni & Cheese

'All Foods Can Fit' into a sensible diet

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

March is National Nutrition Month, and this year's theme is "All Foods Can Fit." Dietitians from around the country are ready to explain how all foods can fit into your diet. I'll let you in on the secret: variety and portion control. All foods can fit if you choose a variety of foods and eat them in sensible portions.

Simply put, variety means making sure that the foods you eat change daily, weekly and monthly, just like the seasons. For example, a breakfast of oatmeal, orange juice and skim milk is wonderfully nutritious. However, if you eat it every day, you'll miss out on other important nutrients found in foods such as rice or wheat cereal, grapefruit juice and non-fat yogurt. Variety means selecting foods from the full spectrum of each food group.

I know how difficult it can be to control portions and assure variety. About 10 years ago I discovered that I had high blood cholesterol. Levels of cholesterol can rise for many reasons. Some people, like me, inherit a tendency toward high levels. But that doesn't mean cholesterol levels can't be controlled. It just takes some work. I had been eating very little meat but lots of vegetables, eggs and cheese, thinking that this semi-vegetarian diet would be good for me.

Always in a hurry, I wasn't careful to watch how much saturated fat and cholesterol I was including in my diet and didn't stop to consider how it might affect me. I did successfully lower my cholesterol by limiting eggs and dairy products but by last November, after I delivered my second baby, my cholesterol crept back up to 301. Perhaps the nine-month pregnancy "pigfest" had an impact but so did the fact that "little things" I was doing were sending my blood fat way over the top.

For instance, two creamers when I sat down with my decaf, eggs, cheese and meat on my salad bar salad and other "little things" added up to the "big" numbers on my lipid profile. So, for now, I do pay attention to portion sizes and include lots more variety in my diet with grains, fruits and vegetables and much smaller servings of dairy, eggs and meat.

Controlling portion size can be difficult. Where food is concerned, it seems as though everywhere we go, whether it's to the grocery store, restaurant or fast food window, the portions are getting bigger. Even though many of us have slashed high-fat, high-cholesterol foods from our diet, we still eat massive amounts of other "nutritious" foods. We think we're being "good" by ordering fish or chicken when we go out. But sometimes the portions we are served—a huge chunk of fish or a half a chicken—negate our good intentions. This mind-set continues at home, too, as we take an extra helping of a low-fat dish, fol-



What a portion should look like

Food:	Object:
• 3 ounces meat or fish	Deck of cards
• 3 ounces cheese	Ping-pong ball
• 1/2 cup pasta	Tulip blossom
• 3/4 cup rice	Tennis ball
• 1 cup cooked vegetables	Baseball
• 2 tablespoon salad dressing	Ice cube

lowed by a bunch of fat-free cookies. But low fat does not mean low calories. A rice cake or fat-free cookie has nearly as many calories as a full-fat cookie. And plain pasta, the golden boy of good nutrition—that's low in fat and rich in B vitamin and iron—can have up to 600 calories in today's average "serving." Keep an eye on the sauces you typically find in some restaurants and look out!

Remember, the larger the portion, the higher the calorie count. Many people who are watching their weight wouldn't consider eating an 8-ounce porterhouse steak. However, they don't realize that a giant bowl of pasta can contain even more calories.

Recent restaurant visits reveal a curious trend: apparently responding to customer demands, restaurants of all kinds are increasing portion sizes, adding back the high-fat selections and preparing dishes with more fat than ever. In the February issue of FoodService Director magazine, a special report indicated that a good barometer of trends in restaurants is the National Restaurant Show, held each year in Chicago. In this year's show low-fat foods were either very low-key or nonexistent. This is in direct contrast to the 1995 show, where low-fat foods were practically everywhere. The magazine also reported that fast food restaurants are joining in by piling on the fat and calories to satisfy the consumer's quest for taste. Taco Bell eliminated all but three of its 11 Border Light menu items; sales for the remaining three account for less than 1 percent of the chain's sales. McDonald's completely eliminated its McLean Deluxe burger after disappointing sales over the last five years.

Grocery shelves are not immune to this bigger-is-better trend either. Manufacturers like Nabisco, with its once highly-sought-after SnackWells line, have experienced flustering retail sales, and Shouffer's Lean Cuisine is now offered in "Hearty Portions."

With these alarming trends, how can I, as a dietitian, say that "all things can fit" in a healthy diet? Again, as tempting as restaurants and grocery stores are making it, with moderation. It is important to remember why we all begin eating more healthily in the first place—for a healthier lifestyle. Even though restaurants are creating ever-larger portions, it is up to us to take responsibility for what we eat. The clean-the-plate mentality can lead to ballooning weight. Watch the way a child eats: enough to satisfy hunger without overstuffing. Remember this and learn to stop when you are full, not necessarily when your plate is empty.

All foods can fit, but certain foods should be limited to less than appetizer-sized portions. These include foods high in fat, cholesterol, salt and sugar. Check the nutrition facts on food labels for your guide. Then enjoy all foods, sensibly.

Peggy Martinelli-Everts, R.D., a Clarkston resident, is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a 31-year-old Farmington Hills-based food service and hospitality management company, specializing in food service management. Look for Peggy's column on the second Sunday of the month in Taste.

See recipes inside.

Satisfy your craving for Mexican food without guilt

BY LAURA L. SYKES
SPECIAL WRITER

Think twice before you order an appetizer bowl of guacamole dip. It is loaded with fat and sodium. An average recipe allows for 1/4 cup of dip per person. That already adds up to 12 grams of fat, 645 milligrams of sodium and 137 calories and doesn't even include the chips! And, more importantly, most of us eat more than 1/4 cup of dip!

This month's recipe makeover is quick and easy. Since most of the ingredients in guacamole are healthy we just have to make a few adjustments.

First, we can replace the avocados with grilled eggplants. Three medium avocados contain 971 calories, 92 grams of fat and 60 milligrams of sodium. Three medium eggplants, on the other hand, contribute only 357 calories, 2.5 grams of fat and 41 milligrams of sodium. This simple substitution easily reduces 90 grams of fat from the recipe or approxi-



ately 11 grams of fat per serving. The average person will eat at least 2 ounces of corn chips with their dip. This contributes 308 calories, 19 grams of fat and 50 milligrams of sodium. By using unsalted baked corn chips we can reduce this to 220 calories, 0 grams of fat and 50 milligrams of sodium.

You can eliminate the 1/2 teaspoon of salt called for in the original guacamole recipe. Substitute fat-free sour cream in place of regular sour cream in the original guacamole recipe, or remove it completely.

If you are just having a Mexican snack craving, try low fat tortilla chips with. This will usually satisfy your urges without adding hundreds of unwanted calories.

GUACAMOLE DIP

Original Version

- Serves 8
- 3 medium avocados, peeled
- 1 tablespoon minced onions
- 1 whole jalapeno pepper, seeded
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 drops hot pepper sauce
- 1/2 cup sour cream

DIRECTIONS

Cut avocados in chunks and remove pits. Place in a blender or food processor with remaining ingredients and blend until smooth. Adjust seasonings to taste.

Nutritional analysis per serving
Calories 104 kcal
Fat 12.5 g Cholesterol 6 mg
Carbohydrate 8 g
Protein 2 g Sodium 137 mg

GUACAMOLE DIP

Low-Fat Version

- Serves 8
- 3 small eggplants
- 1 tablespoon minced onion
- 1 whole jalapeno pepper, seeded
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 drops hot pepper sauce
- 1/2 cup fat-free sour cream

DIRECTIONS

Grill or broil eggplants until cooked through. Peel and place in blender or food processor. Add remaining ingredients and blend until smooth. Adjust seasonings to taste.

Nutritional analysis per serving
Calories 70 kcal
Fat 1 g Cholesterol 30 mg
Carbohydrate 14 g
Protein 3 g Sodium 579 mg