

HOME SENSE



LOIS THIELEKE

Baked, mashed or fried, potatoes are number one

Potatoes are the number one vegetable in the U.S. The average person consumes about 132 pounds of potatoes a year. Fifty pounds of that is fresh potatoes and 82 pounds is in the form of chips, or other products.

A potato has more potassium than a banana, 510 mg, compared to 450 mg. Potassium is a mineral that helps regulate your heart beat and may lower blood pressure. Potatoes are also one of the most economical sources of vitamin C, vitamin B6, magnesium, folacin, copper, iron, and other trace elements. A medium size potato is about 110 calories without butter or sour cream.

Cooking tips

- For creamier mashed potatoes, use all-purpose red potatoes.
- For fluffier mashed potatoes, use russets.
- For flavorful potatoes, substitute chicken broth or milk for half the cooking water.
- Summer, don't boil potatoes or they may become soggy. Cook until just tender.
- Heat liquid before adding to the mashed potatoes. This helps prevent them from becoming "gluey."
- Leave a few lumps in the mashed potatoes so people will know they are made from scratch.
- Brown the top of mashed potatoes by putting them in a casserole, dotting with butter and broiling for a few minutes.
- To make fluffy mashed potatoes ahead of time, put mashed potatoes into a microwave container to cool. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate up to two days. Microwave to reheat when you are ready to serve them. Keep covered but vented to let steam escape. Stir half way during the heating process.
- Thicken soups with pureed cooked potatoes instead of cream. Leftover mashed potatoes added to soup gives it body and additional nutrients.
- To bake potatoes in a hurry, prebail the potatoes for five minutes before putting them in the oven at 375 degrees F or put an aluminum skewer through them to bake. Either way, it speeds up the baking time by 15-20 minutes.
- The secret to great french fries is to peel and cut and soak the potatoes in cold water for at least an hour before frying. The water removes some of the starch and will make the fries crispier.
- Put peeled potatoes in a bowl of cold water or they will turn brown before you boil them.
- Always cut potatoes into uniform sizes so they cook evenly without getting mushy.
- For a tasty treat, add Parmesan cheese or crumbled bacon to mashed potatoes, or pizza sauce, or top with sesame seeds, horseradish, blue cheese, pickled beets, Italian dressing, or anything else you can think of.
- Don't drown potatoes when cooking, use a heavy saucepan with a tight fitting lid and only about one-inch of water.
- To get the most nutrients from a baked potato, eat the skin too. Once for once, the skin has more fiber, iron, potassium and B vitamins than the flesh.
- Wet potato skins to keep them crispy. Place potatoes in a hot oven 375 degrees F and bake one hour for twice baked potatoes. Add yogurt or skin milk and fat-free butter spray to the mashed potatoes before putting back into the skin. Top with lots of scallions to reheat.

Please see SENSE, D2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Recipe to share
- Winter warm-ups

COACH YOUR OWN

The Game Plan

One to two weeks ahead:

- Prepare invitations
- Create a trivia game. Ask computer-savvy family members and friends to search for trivia on various NFL and Super Bowl Web sites.
- Consider prizes such as NFL car flags, T-shirts, or bobbing head dolls.

One week ahead:

- Plan menu; make grocery list
- Buy non-perishable items such as snacks, nuts, olives, salsa, canned goods and beverages.
- Purchase paper goods, plastic glasses, utensils and table decor in team colors, or football theme.

Friday/Saturday before the game:

- Buy perishables such as fresh vegetables, salad greens, dips.
- Make chili and other items that can be prepared ahead of time.
- Get out cooler, serving platters and utensils, set buffet table.
- Prepare and refrigerate crisp vegetable relishes - carrots, celery, green pepper strips, cauliflowerwots, etc.

Party day:

- An hour before kick-off, chill beverages; begin to set out snacks in TV room.
- Prior to half-time, reheat chili and other main courses, toss salad, bring food to table.
- For half-time or after the game, set out desserts, bring to table, make coffee.

Information supplied by Sargento Foods Inc.

Super Bowl XXXIV at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta promises to be a spectacular event.

Super Bowl Party



Super Bowl Sunday, Jan. 30, is a big day for informal entertaining. It's become traditional to round up a group of friends, put out a meal of casual food such as chili, pizza, sandwiches or lasagna, and gather around the TV to cheer for your favorite team.

Super Bowl XXXIV at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta promises to be a spectacular event. An estimated 130 million Americans watched the game last year.

ABC is broadcasting the big game beginning at 6 p.m. For a behind-the-scenes peek at what's scheduled, visit the Super Bowl Web site www.SuperBowl.com.

You'll learn all sorts of interesting things such as the Super Bowl is the top at-home party event of the year, surpassing New Year's Eve, according to Hallmark Cards Inc.

The American Institute of Food Distribution reports Super Bowl Sunday is the second largest day of food consumption behind only Thanksgiving. An estimated 14,500 tons of chips and 4,000 tons of popcorn and eight million pounds of guacamole are eaten on Super Bowl Sunday.

It's time to develop a strategy so that you can enjoy the game with

guests and not spend all your time running to the kitchen.

Oh, and here's a couple more things I learned while visiting the Super Bowl Web site that you'll want to keep in mind as you plan your party - 6 percent of Americans will call in sick the day after Super Bowl Sunday. Fifty-four percent of all Americans will drink coffee the morning after, and Super Bowl weekend is the slowest weekend for weddings.

"The Super Bowl becomes like two parties," said Chef Kevin Enright, a culinary arts instructor at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. "People go into different rooms. The women visit in one room while the men watch the game. You almost have to have little buffets."

Enright's game is hockey, but if he were hosting a Super Bowl party he'd serve something hearty such as roast brisket of beef with roasted potatoes, parsnips and carrots.

Another option is a black bean casserole with tomato salsa, or navy bean soup, some smoked chicken or

turkey, and an assortment of cold cuts including some nice salami and salami.

"You might want to consider fajitas, which people can make themselves," said Enright. "You supply the fillings and toppings. Barbecue chicken or beef for the fajitas. When it snows Enright shovels a path to his gas grill which he uses year-round."

"Don't try to please everyone," he suggests. "Make foods you like and are familiar with. A party is an opportunity to learn something new, try one new dish. Chefs do that, too."

With three boys and a husband who love football, Ginger Broome of Canton is already thinking about Super Bowl Sunday. "I'm in the kitchen cooking while they're watching TV," she said.

When asked how she would get

Please see PARTY, D2

Alsace produces flavorful yet puzzling whites

Alsace, the eastern French wine region bordering Germany, produces the world's most flavorful white wines. Yet, many people are puzzled by them.

These wines are easy to understand and easy to like if you think of them as a unique combination of French and German.

The tall green German-style bottles and Germanic grape varieties such as riesling and gewurztraminer are complemented by French winemaking techniques and another set of soft-sounding French grape varieties such as pinot blanc and pinot gris. Make no mistake, they are all French wines.

A long, rich history of wine grapes helps explain the region's splendid cultural mix that has produced wine since the sixth century. By the end of the 16th century, white grapes such as riesling, pinot gris, muscat, pinot blanc and pinot noir, a lone red, were the favored grape varieties. They remain so today.

R.E. Trimbach

The Alsace region's best known wines, those



of F.E. Trimbach, date back to a founding in 1626. Over the years, the Trimbach family secured extensive vineyard holdings in the village of Ribeauvillé. Today, Hubert Trimbach and his older brother Bernard, along with Bernard's sons, Pierre and Jean, are the 11th and 12th generation family members guiding the largest and most widely-recognized Alsace brand in the U.S.

"While appreciated by people who have discovered them, Alsace wines are largely overlooked in the U.S.," noted Hubert Trimbach during his recent visit to metro Detroit. "In part, it's the confusion about whether Alsace wines are French or German. Add the fact that it was only after the end of World War II that the wines were able to be sold out of the region, and it's easy to understand why."

Alsace style

Trimbach went on to explain the style of his family's wines. "First, they are food friendly. All wines are fermented to dry-

ness. Their natural fruit acidity, without malolactic fermentation, keeps them fresh and long-lived. Without oak aging, they retain vitality and the essence of grape character."

The Trimbach philosophy is to hold the wines at least a year before they are released to market. In the case of single-vineyard cuvées, the wines are not released until four or five years after harvest. This major investment in inventory by the Trimbachs benefits consumers by ensuring that the wines are well-aged before they are enjoyed.

While it is customary to consider red wines with heartier winter dishes, we're suggesting an about face - white wines of Alsace to accompany winter squash soups, smoked ham and lentil soup, well-spiced crusted fish, roast chicken, and every Asian-influenced dish that comes to mind.

Sampling

Just a note: the 1997 vintage may prove to be the greatest in Alsace since 1949. Big wines with huge extract.

■ 1997 Trimbach Pinot Blanc \$14 is a perfect aperitif with fruit, light cheese or phyllo dough stuffed with cheese or veggies.

■ 1997 Trimbach Gewurztraminer \$19 with its citrus and grapefruit zest notes could be served as an aperitif, but better with a winter soup brimming with brown spices, such as cinnamon, clove and nutmeg.

■ 1997 Trimbach Pinot Gris Reserve \$19 has not only generous flavors, but great weight and length to accompany pate, salmon, scallops or roast chicken.

■ 1995 Trimbach Riesling \$19 with distinct lime and mineral notes has more balanced acidity than dry German rieslings. Delicate and refined, it's a best bet with any seafood or an onion tart.

■ 1995 Trimbach Riesling Cuvée Frederick Emile \$34 is what Alsace riesling is all about. It showcases not only fabulous complexity, but the uniqueness of its region of origin.

Look for Focus on Wine on the first and third Sunday of the month in Taste. If you organize or belong to a local wine club, we'd like to interview you. Please phone us by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1864. Speaking clearly, leave your name, telephone number and best time to phone you.

Wine Picks

■ Pick of the pack: 1997 Joseph Phelps Ovation Chardonnay, a class act at \$40;

1997 Ferrari-Carano Siena, a full-flavored red at \$28; and full-bodied

1997 Pines Ridge Carmere Merlot \$42.

■ Start a wine cellar with the picks of the pack and add: 1996 Clos du Bois Marlboro \$30 and 1997 Antinori Pignone Chianti Classico \$20.

■ Great whites at \$20 and under: 1998 Chateau de la Ragotiere Muscadet Sevre et Maine \$13.50 (great with seafood); 1998 Clos du Bois Chardonnay Reserve \$16; and Ferrari-Carano Reserve Fumé \$18.

■ Great reds at \$20 and under: 1997 Geyser Peak Zinfandel \$16; 1997 Villa M. Eden Pinot Noir \$12; and 1997 Boinger Founder's Estate Merlot \$11.

■ Real deals: Caramar Estate Merlot and Shiraz from Australia, both \$10 and 1999 Alexander Valley Vineyards New Gewurz, an off-dry taste treat at \$9.



Winery: The F.E. Trimbach winery in the Alsace village of Ribeauvillé, France was founded in 1626.