

Stuffed baked potatoes are easy to prepare

Meat and potatoes are the mainstay of good American cooking. That's just one of the reasons the recent trend in eating potatoes stuffed with just about any food, including meat, has become so popular. Many fast-food restaurants serve them stuffed with steamed broccoli and cheese or a Mexican-flavored tomato sauce. Some restaurants even offer a "Stuffed Potato Bar" where you can choose from the traditional sour cream, butter, chives and bacon bits or sliced tomatoes, green pepper, or grated cheese toppings. Just about any combination goes!

Not only do stuffed potatoes make a fun and unique meal, they're good for you. When making a meal out of a stuffed potato, it's probably best to select a large potato, which is a little over half a pound and contains about 190 calories. At the same time, it's an important source of fiber, complex carbohydrates, vitamin C and several of the B vitamins.

percent iron; 22 percent riboflavin; 19 percent calcium; and 19 percent thiamin.

Another advantage to serving a stuffed potato meal is that it is relatively easy to prepare. After scrubbing the potatoes gently, but thoroughly, prick them lightly with fork to allow steam to escape while cooking. Next, lightly oil the skins to soften them. (Omit this step if you cook the potatoes in the microwave oven.)

As the potatoes bake (about an hour in the oven or just under 15 minutes in the microwave oven) prepare the beef and cheese toppings.

For an economical dish, use fresh, boneless beef chuck top blade steaks. This steak is a tasty, but less expensive, piece of beef. You'll need to remove any excess connective tissue, and then cut the beef into thin strips which are quickly fried with green pepper and shallots.

Spoon a portion of this beef mixture on top of an opened baked potato, top with cheese sauce and serve piping hot.

TASTY BEEF-STUFFED POTATOES

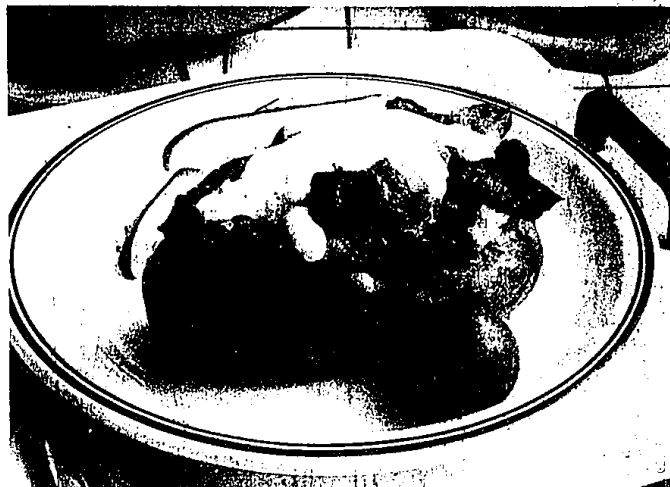
Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 50 to 60 minutes
1 lb. boneless beef chuck top blade steaks, cut 1/4 inch thick
4 large baking potatoes
Oil
1 small green pepper, coarsely chopped
1/2 cup coarsely chopped shallots
2 Tbsp. butter

Salt
Pepper
1/4 cup half and half
1 Tbsp. Dijon-style mustard
1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese

Scrub potatoes, prick each with a fork. Rub skins lightly with oil. Bake in a moderate oven (375 degrees F.) 50 to 60 minutes or until done. Meanwhile partially freeze steaks to firm. Divide each steak into 2 pieces, following natural seam and removing connective tissue between pieces. Cut each piece across the grain into thin strips. Cook green pepper and shallots in butter in large frying pan over medium-high heat 2 minutes. Add beef (1/2 at a time) and continue cooking 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly. Season with salt and pepper; keep warm. Place half and half in small saucepan, stir in mustard and cheese and cook and stir over medium heat until cheese is melted. Cut potatoes lengthwise across top; gently push ends to open and break up pulp. Spoon an equal amount of beef mixture into each potato; top with an equal amount of cheese sauce. Serve immediately. 4 servings.

MICROWAVE DIRECTIONS:
Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 15 minutes

Omit rubbing potato skins with oil. Bake potatoes in microwave oven at HIGH 12 to 14 minutes; rotating 1/4 turn after 8 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes. Proceed with conventional directions. 4 servings.



Beef stuffed baked potato is an easy-to-prepare delicious meal in itself.

WHEN A nutritious potato is topped with other equally nutritious food, such as beef and a cheese sauce, it can practically become a meal by itself.

For example, one serving of Tasty Beef Stuffed Potatoes (which includes one potato, a three-ounce meat portion and a cheese sauce topping) has the following amounts of nutrients an adult needs every day — 110 percent vitamin C; 76 percent protein; 15 percent phosphorus; 35 percent niacin; 27

Eating out needn't spoil your diet

pilot light
Greg Melikov

Green rice is worth the mini trauma

I usually rely on garnish or sauces to color dishes.

I stay away from dyes — except for Easter eggs not counting the time I had blue meat. It came from South America. I really can't tell you why the meat was blue. I can tell you why I was. It was psychological. Blue and meat just didn't go together in my mind's eye.

Spinach and green go together. I've found that green is a restful color at the dining room table. Rice and green don't go together, but the flavoring is worth the mini-trauma.

If you're squeamish, you can dine by candlelight.

GREEN SOUP

3 cups clear chicken broth
1 cup water
1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed
1/2 pound sliced boiled ham, coarsely cut
1/4 cup instant mashed-potato powder
1/4 pound peppercorn, thinly sliced

In medium saucepan, combine broth, water, spinach and ham, bring to boil, reduce heat to medium and simmer 5 minutes, occasionally stirring. Stir in instant potato and peppercorn and simmer several minutes until slightly thickened. Serve with chunks of warm, buttered bread. Serves 4-5.

GREEN RICE

4 green peppers, seeded and cut up
1 cup coarsely chopped parsley
1 cup coarsely chopped onion
1 garlic clove, crushed
2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/2 cup olive oil
1 1/2 cups raw long-grain white rice
2 1/2 cups clear chicken broth

In blender or food processor, blend green peppers, parsley and onion in 3 increments until pulverized and turn into bowl. Add garlic, salt and pepper and blend well. In large saucepan, heat oil and saute rice about 5 minutes, constantly stirring. Add green pepper mixture, reduce heat to medium and simmer 5 minutes, occasionally stirring. In small saucepan, bring broth to boiling and pour over rice. Let rice resume boiling, reduce heat to medium low, cover and cook about 15 minutes, without stirring, until liquid is absorbed. Fluff up rice with fork just before serving. Serves 6-8.

The typical American eats out once a day. How are your meals out prepared? The answer is important, especially if you are watching your weight.

You can eat away from home and yet enjoy delicious meals that conform with the American Heart Association's dietary recommendations. One way to do it is to watch for the AHA name on restaurant menus. You can find meal options approved by AHA in a growing number of restaurants (Sizzler Family Steakhouse and the Hungry Tiger, for example), hotels (Marriott, Fairmont and Sheraton) and even on airplanes (American Airlines).

The goal of the AHA's "Eating Away from Home" program is to provide tasty and heart-healthy meals low in fat and cholesterol. The AHA selects items on the menu are generally lower in calories too because of smaller portions and modified methods of preparation. For example, meats are lean and usually baked or broiled and vegetables are prepared without heavy sauces. In some parts of the United States, dining out guides produced by local AHA chapters list restaurants that routinely, or at your request, prepare food according to AHA's dietary guidelines.

IF YOU don't know enough about a restaurant, call it in advance to ask about the food and whether special requests will be honored. Ask whether the restaurant will: (1) Serve margarine rather than butter, and skim rather than whole milk? (2) Prepare a dish using vegetable oil — corn, soy, sunflower, safflower — or margarine rather than butter? (3) Trim visible fat off meat and skin off poultry? (4) Prepare a dish without salt or monosodium glutamate, MSG? (5) Serve fruit — fresh or in light syrup — for dessert? (6) Have a special seating area for non-smokers?

Once you're in the restaurant, be assertive. Remember that you are the patron. Don't be intimidated by the menu, atmosphere, waiter or waitress. If you wish to cut down on the size of your meal, choose appetizers as the main course, order a la carte or share food with a companion. Insist that food be served the way you want it — with dressings, gravies and sauces on the side; for example. Send the food back if they don't do it right.

Help your heart! You can get a healthy meal if you know how. When reading the menu, look for items prepared without adding fat, such as those that are steamed, cooked in their own juice,

broiled, roasted or poached. Avoid food cooked in butter sauce, cream sauce, cheese sauce, hollandaise or gravy. Also avoid food that's been stewed, fried, braised, creamed, escalloped, baked, steamed, pickled or smoked.

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