

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 100 calories. At the same time, it's an important source of fiber, complex carbohydrates, vitamin C and several of the B vitamins.

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; 75 percent protein; 35 per-

cent phosphorus; 35 percent niacin; 27 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
1/2 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 1 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 cook 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 6 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes. Proceed with conventional directions. 4 servings.



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

Grill a ham for fall BBQ

There is a lot of argument on what barbecue is supposed to be. Since the word itself is both a noun and a verb (it refers to a popular outdoor cooking procedure as well as a food by the same name), and since the product varies according to differences in regions, probably no other kind of cooking causes so much disagreement.

How barbecue is served (it can be sliced, chopped or served in chunks), whether the accompanying marinade or sauce is tomato-based or vinegar with spices, and whether the meat is pork, beef or chicken or only a few of several touchy areas. If pork happens to be the favored meat, then the distinction must be made as to whether the whole pig is used or just certain parts of the animal, the shoulder and ham in particular.

Additionally, there is the subject of what to eat with barbecue. Cole slaw — either the mayonnaise or barbecue kind — is the traditional accompaniment. But baked beans bush puppies (cornbread-like nuggets fried in hot fat) and french fried potatoes may also be served. Again, it all depends on regional preferences.

A major force in the South, barbecue is famous in North Carolina and in cities such as Memphis, St. Louis and Kansas City. It generally takes two forms — chopped or sliced — but either way, the best way to eat barbecue is on a roll or bun as a sandwich.

Ribs are as commonplace as sandwiches in most barbecue establishments. And pork seems to win out as being the preferred ribs meat.

Barbecue is exceptionally tender as a result of long, slow cooking. For this, a rotisserie, a modern-day device on most home grills, is recommended. That way, the meat can be left unattended. It actually bastes itself while cooking. Sauces are not necessary, unlike most recipes where meats are basted frequently. For authentic barbecue, the sauce is applied either at the end of cooking by the cook, or by the diners themselves.

Drawing on recipes from across the country, Grilled Fresh Ham starts with a boneless pork leg, commonly known to consumers as ham, but that name is really a misnomer because the cut is not cured like ordinary hams.

Fresh ham or pork leg is of predictably high quality. And though it is not widely available in supermarkets, it can easily be ordered by a call to your meat department a day or two in advance.

There is no end to the number of ways fresh ham can be prepared. Cooked whole on the grill and served up as barbecue in a sandwich is but one way to enjoy it. Vinegar and lemon juice used in the following recipe leave a pleasing pungency typical of Southern-style barbecue. For those with an adventurous streak, a handful of herbs thrown on the fire can leave a lasting impression, too.

GRILLED FRESH HAM
1 4 to 5 pound boneless fresh ham (pork leg)
1/4 cup chili sauce
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp dry mustard
1 clove garlic, minced

Place ham on rotisserie of grill. If desired, make a foil drip pan about 1 1/2 inches deep and extending about 3 inches on each side of ham; place under rotisserie. Insert meat thermometer in thickest part of ham, not touching fat or rotisserie rod. Close grill hood. Grill over slow coals for 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours or till meat thermometer registers 165°F.

For sauce, in a small bowl combine chili sauce, vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, and garlic; mix well. Brush ham frequently with sauce during the last hour of grilling time. Let ham stand at least 10 minutes before carving to allow juices to set. (Temperature will continue to rise to reach the recommended 170 degrees internal temperature.) Makes 12 to 15 servings.



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