

CLASSIC CREAMY MASHED POTATOES

8 servings

This method is for classic, basic, plain- whatever you want to call them- mashed potatoes. That doesn't make them less special and they should not be discounted. There's so much going on on the table that sometimes it's nice to have a fluffy bed of basic, creamy starch to pile everything on without fourteen other flavors competing for attention.

4 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 cups half and half (alternatively, yes you can use one cup milk and one cup heavy cream)

4 Tbsp. (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, plus more for serving

Flaky sea salt, finely chopped chives (optional)

1. Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover with about 2 inches of water. Season well with salt and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes until they're totally cooked through and tender, almost falling apart—about 20 minutes (poke the potatoes periodically with a fork or tip of a knife to check for tenderness). FYI: Over boiled potatoes will give you watery mashed potatoes, underboiled will give you lumpy mashed potatoes, so try to get them just right.
2. Drain the potatoes well (you want as much water gone as possible) and return them to the pot. Place them over low heat and using a wooden spoon, stir occasionally for about 5 minutes (this dries them out a bit to avoid watery mashed potatoes). While that's happening, heat the half and half and butter in a small pot until the butter melts and the milk is hot. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Using a wooden spoon crush the potatoes in the pot, breaking them up as much as possible (you can, of course, use a ricer or masher or electric mixer-- I prefer a slightly lumpier mashed potato and the wooden spoon works great for me, but to each their own).
4. Season with salt and pepper and add the hot half and half mixture to the potatoes and continue mashing and/or mixing. Don't go too crazy or you'll end up with a gluey mess.
5. To serve, spoon them into a bowl (or serve them straight from the pot). Plop a little bit of butter on top and watch it melt, finish with flaky sea salt, more pepper and if you're feeling wild: some chopped chives.

NOTE

Mashed potatoes can be made a few days ahead if you really must, but these are so simple, why not throw together last minute? If you are going to make ahead, add a splash of half and half, milk or cream before reheating over a low and slow flame.