

Potato salad: Everyone's summertime favorite

Written by By CINDY WELCH, News-Telegram Food Columnist
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Summer grills are at full fire and picnics are on the rise. Barbecue, a summer staple for parts of the country and a year-round fix for Texans, is also on the menu. When you think grill, picnic and barbecue there has to be a potato salad somewhere in the vicinity.

Potato salad is just like other regional favorites, everyone has their own way of doing things. Potato salad favorites swing all the way from the warm, smooth German versions to the chunky, mayonnaise American style, to unusual sweet potato salads.

Although there is no official ruling, Germany is the place most writers consider as the source for potato salad. Cooks familiar with this salad know that a German potato salad usually indicates a salad that is served warm, with a creamier texture and pleasantly tart with vinegar. The dressings for the potato salads of German origin begin with some of their favorite flavors, bacon, vinegar and mustard.

The American version of potato salad usually includes mayonnaise and hard-boiled eggs. It shares several ingredients with egg salad. Everything from the type of potatoes to the ingredients for the dressing can vary according to individual taste.

Potatoes – while I prefer a cold salad made with Idaho potatoes, boiled in their jackets and then peeled upon cooling, Yukon Golds also provide moisture and color. New potatoes are a great change of pace in the Green Goddess New Potato Salad.

Mayo versus Mustard – Growing up my family always put mustard and mayonnaise in their potato salad. When I got married, I discovered that my husband's family never used mustard. Today it is one of my favorite salads. I do occasionally add just a pinch of honey mustard to brighten the flavor.

Smooth versus chunky – some people actually like their potato salad the consistency of mashed potatoes. Myself, I prefer some chunky parts along with the smooth.

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Sweet Relish versus dill relish – I choose sweet relish to give my potato salad the tart vinegar bite with just a touch of sweetness. It also adds great color with the red and green in the relish.

All of the chilled salads will be at their best if you remember to 1) adjust the salt and pepper to taste - a bland potato salad isn't tasty, 2) chill or allow the potatoes to come to room temperature before adding the dressing if you want it in solid chunks, 3) add the dressing to the salad at your location if you will not have refrigeration available and 4) quickly chill leftovers to avoid contamination due to the high protein content.

Mary Welch's Basic Potato Salad

3 oz. potatoes per serving, unpeeled
1 boiled egg per two servings, chopped
1 tablespoon sweet pickle relish per serving
Mayonnaise
Salt and Pepper to taste
1-2 teaspoons honey mustard, optional
Boil the potatoes. Cool and remove skins. Place in mixing bowl. Chop slightly into chunks. Add boiled egg and relish. Add mayonnaise to desired consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add honey mustard if desired.

Green Goddess New Potato Salad

Prepare the dressing below or simply add your favorite Green Goddess dressing to the new potatoes.

1 1/2 pounds red new potatoes, boiled, cut into bite size pieces
1/2 cup Green Goddess Dressing
Snipped chives for garnish

Green Goddess Dressing:

4 anchovy fillets, chopped
2 green onions, green parts only, finely chopped
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 tablespoons chopped tarragon
2 tablespoons tarragon vinegar
2 tablespoons minced chives
1 1/2 cups mayonnaise

In a food processor or blender, puree the anchovies, green onions, parsley, tarragon, vinegar and chives, or grind with a mortar and pestle to make a fairly smooth paste. Stir the mixture into the mayonnaise. Refrigerate tightly covered.

Grilled Sweet Potato and Mango Salad

2 sweet potatoes, peeled
2 large mangos, skin removed

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Dressing:

3 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
Juice of 1 lime
1 teaspoon grated lime rind
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon sugar
salt and pepper to taste

Chop the sweet potato and mango into wedges. Place in separate dishes. Combine the remaining ingredients for the dressing in a small bowl. Pour half over the sweet potato and mango. Set the remainder aside.

With tongs, arrange the sweet potato wedges on the grill and leave for 6-8 minutes or until grill marks appear and the bottom side begins to soften. Turn and grill on the other side for 6 minutes or until soft. While grilling the second side, arrange the mango wedges on the grill and grill 2-3 minutes per side. Transfer all of the wedges to a cutting board and cut into cubes. Toss with the remainder of the dressing and serve warm.

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For the past 20 years, Cindy Welch has been involved with all aspects of cooking, including formal culinary training, experience as food service director for First Baptist Church of Euless, a personal chef and owner of Cindy's Casa Cuisine. Cindy's favorite hobby is "providing delicious food for the people of Sulphur Springs." Her columns cover all aspects of the cooking experience.