

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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January 3, 2008

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Have you ever had the experience of whipping a pot of boiled potatoes, and watching in dismay as they turn into a lump of grey glue? It's not a pretty sight, especially if you have a houseful of guests arriving for dinner! What happened, and how do you prevent it from happening?

The fault is not in any of your methods. Whether you boil them in water or broth, add hot milk or cold milk, certain potatoes are just not made for mashing. It depends on the kind of starch and amount of moisture Mother Nature put in them. Some kinds have a starch that gets waxy if it is beaten. Others have a mealy starch. Some start out with a lot more moisture than others. You can't change the starch.

For American-style mashed potatoes *Russet* potatoes or the smaller round white potatoes have the best type of starch. Russets are usually sold as baking potatoes and sometimes just called Idaho potatoes. However, here's the tricky part. There is another kind of potato called *long white* that are also sold for baking. They are both large, oval and excellent for baking. But long whites have the wrong kind of starch for mashing. If they are both mixed in the "baking potato" bin at the store you'll likely get glue if you mash these.

The easiest way to tell these large oval potatoes apart is by the skin. Russet potatoes have a thick, rough skin and lots of eyes. Long whites have a very thin, smooth skin and very few eyes. You can tell by looking at them if you have a Russet or a long white in your hand. If you're not sure just rub a thumb over the skin. A very smooth skin is not for mashing. Baby long white potatoes are called *fingerlings*.

The medium-sized *round whites* are just what the name says - round. Like red

potatoes these are usually sold for boiling. Round whites make great mashed potatoes too. They and the reds both hold together in the pot, so they are also great for potato salad. Sometimes you might see round white potatoes called *Katahdin*, from the area in Maine where they are mostly grown.

A newer variety that also makes good mashed potatoes are the yellow ones, the *Yukon Golds*. Other colored varieties are being resurrected from their obscure histories in South America. We now have purple, lavender, blue, almost black, orange, red, pink, even spotted or swirled potatoes. These are best used for boiling, either whole or cubed, or for roasting. The biggest impact is the color, not a flavor difference.

New potatoes can be of any variety. Because they are so young and immature they don't have much starch. They are sweeter, but don't have a full potato-y flavor. They are best used for boiling whole or for roasting.

Avoid potatoes that are sprouted, shriveled or green. The green color comes from certain chemicals made when potatoes are exposed to too much light. Potato sprouts also have high levels of the chemicals. These can be toxic if too much is eaten. So either don't use green potatoes or peel them enough that all the green is gone.

If you plan to bake or boil potatoes you can safely store them in the refrigerator. However, if french fries or hash browns are on the menu, keep the potatoes in a dark cupboard instead. If they get too cold their starch turns to sugar. When they're fried they get dark too fast and might get bitter.

Here's my favorite variation on twice-baked potatoes, with a Florida twist. You can use low-fat sour cream instead of the butter for more flavor. Enjoy!

Crabby Potatoes

4 Russet baking potatoes	½ C skim milk
1/3 C butter or margarine, softened	1 tsp salt
4 oz (1 C) shredded low fat Cheddar cheese	4 tsp grated onion
1 - 6 oz can crab meat, drained, flaked	½ tsp paprika

1/8 tsp cayenne pepper

Bake potatoes until tender. Keep oven hot at 400° F. Slice potatoes in half lengthwise. Scoop out pulp, leaving a shell of skin and some pulp. Mash pulp, milk, butter, salt and pepper until blended. Fold in cheese, crab and onion. Spoon mixture back into skin shells, mounding slightly. Dust with paprika. Arrange on baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve hot. Serves 8.

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