

Julia's American-Style Potato Salad



Julia Child and Jacques Pepin, Julia and Jacques
Cooking at Home, Knopf

Potato salad is perfect picnic fare, but it is a good side dish any time of year, dressed and garnished in various styles to suit the season. Julia's American-style potato salad is garnished with hard-boiled eggs and crisp bacon bits, chopped pickles, onions, and celery, all given a light coating of homemade mayonnaise. Make this at least an hour ahead of time so the flavors have time to ripen, and serve cool or at room temperature.

2 pounds large Yukon Gold potatoes, or other waxy, boiling potatoes
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1/3 cup chicken stock or potato-cooking water
2/3 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 cup finely chopped celery
3 or 4 slices crisply cooked bacon, chopped or crumbled
2 to 3 Tbs finely chopped pickle, sweet or dill
2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced thin
3 Tbs or so finely chopped fresh chives or scallions, including a bit of their tender green
Salt and freshly ground white pepper
1 cup or so mayonnaise, homemade if possible
Sour cream, optional

For garnishing

Crisp whole red-leaf or other lettuce leaves
Canned red pimiento, diced; sliced hard-boiled eggs; tomato quarters; parsley sprigs

Peel the potatoes and slice each one lengthwise in half, or in quarters if very large; then cut crosswise into half-round or quarter-round slices, about 1/2 inch thick.

Put the slices in a saucepan with water just to cover and 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt per quart of water. Heat to a simmer, and cook the potatoes for 5 to 6 minutes, or until just cooked through. It is essential that they be just cooked through. Bite into a slice or two to be very sure. Immediately remove from the heat and drain the potatoes into a colander, but save a cup of the cooking liquid for dressing the potatoes. Transfer bowl. Stir the cider vinegar with 1/3 cup of the potato water or chicken stock and drizzle this over the potato pieces, turning them gently to distribute it evenly. Let sit 10 minutes to absorb the liquid.

Add the prepared onion, celery, bacon, pickle, hard-boiled eggs, and chives, and season carefully, to taste. Top with 2/3 cup of mayonnaise (or a mix of mayonnaise and a bit of sour cream) and, with a large rubber spatula, gently fold everything together until well blended. Taste the salad and add more salt, pepper, or mayonnaise as needed.

Cover the salad and set aside in the refrigerator for at least an hour or so before serving. If it is refrigerated longer, let it come back to room temperature before serving. Taste and adjust the seasoning again.

Recipe Summary

Difficulty: Easy

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 12 minutes

Yield: About 6 cups, serving 4 to 6

User Rating: ★★★★★

To serve, line a bowl or a platter with red-leaf lettuce or other greens, and mound the salad on top. Decorate at the last moment, if you wish, with any or all of the optional garnishes.

Copyright © 2006 Television Food Network, G.P., All Rights Reserved