

ALI'S KITCHEN

Air Fryer Potato Fries: A Culinary Hit!

The boys forgot about video games, eating right off the parchment papers

Column and photos by Ali Carter, Wisconsin Potato Growers Auxiliary

The weeks of stay-at-home mandates and favorite restaurants boarded up with "Closed Due to COVID-19" signs on their doors had an interesting impact on some families.

Many suddenly found themselves in the unfamiliar territory of preparing three meals a day, day after day, and some took on the brand-new adventure of learning to cook for themselves for the very first time.

It seems that unprecedented times and forced change swirled together to create more cooks in their kitchens, and a few minutes on social media reveals a current interest in cooking gadgets and simple recipes.

In particular, I noticed quite a number of posts throughout the months of April and May about people cooking

with air fryers, and this inspired me to dig through our top pantry shelves and locate our little-used appliance.

After dusting off the air fryer and using it for a day or two, I remembered why it was tucked away on that top shelf, but I also recalled that it does a fabulous job when you want a batch of hot, crispy, homemade French fries!

FAST, CRISPY FOOD

An air fryer is a small convection oven that cooks food by circulating hot air at high speed. This, along with the small space, produces crispy food in a fraction of the time it would take in a conventional oven.

This is good when you're looking to cook something quickly and you want the food to come out crisp. However, the air fryer baskets are small ... small, small. And this is not so good when attempting to use one to cook a meal that will feed more than a couple people.

In that case, you will end up having to cook in batches and this often feels time consuming and a bit frustrating to me.

Oh, but the French fries that come out of an air fryer are fabulous! Baked French fries are delicious, yet they do not have the same texture as the fried version.

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Ingredients: *Air Fryer Potato Fries*

- 1 lb. potatoes (peeled and sliced into 1/4-1/2-inch French fries)
- 1 Tbsp. coconut oil (melted)
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 1/2 tsp. course ground black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. garlic salt
- 1/8 tsp. onion powder

Ingredients: *Fry Sauce*

- 1-1/2 cups mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 2 Tbsp. Franks Red Hot Buffalo Sauce (more or less, depending how spicy you like things)
- 1 Tbsp. pickle juice
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 tsp. paprika
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt



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While fries made in the air fryer are still not quite as indulgently gratifying as those deep-fried potatoes, they do come very close and use a tiny bit of oil comparatively.

Classic ketchup is always good for dipping French fries, but I have a love for creating sauces and a belief that the right sauce can make the best food all the better. Pair these fries with the sauce and you will have a culinary hit on your hands!

FRENCH FRY FEAST

We have enjoyed a lot of French fries at our house since I rediscovered the ease of making them in our air fryer last month. This latest batch was made as a mid-afternoon snack while our middle son was home for the weekend.

The middle and youngest sons had disappeared to play games downstairs and I had not heard or seen them for a good solid hour or more. After I laid the hot fries out on parchment paper, mixed up a small bowl of the sauce and called my husband and the two boys into the kitchen, no one left the room.

The three boys pulled out stools and sat around the kitchen counter.

We did not bother with plates, but instead chose to eat communal style directly from the parchment paper and enjoyed the fries while chatting and tentatively making plans for our upcoming summer months.

It is amazing how food can bring people together, isn't it?

Potato fries are the classic comfort food, an easy side dish that will go perfectly with anything you're grilling this summer, or the perfect afternoon snack when you want kids to forget about the video games and just hang out for a while.

TIPS:

- Russets are typically the go-to potato for fries. I tried russets and yellows, and both worked equally well.

- You can peel the potatoes if you want or leave the skin on. I prefer no peel on my fries but leaving the skin on saves time.
- The thinner you cut your fries, the crispier they will become in the air fryer.
- Do your best to cut the potatoes into uniform-sized fries so they cook and crisp up at the same time. That way, you are not left with some fries that are under-cooked while others are overly crunchy.
- Coconut oil handles high heat better than olive oil. I prefer coconut oil for a nice, crisp French fry. But if you do not care for the subtle flavor, feel free to use olive oil.
- While every air fryer is different, smaller fries cook faster and larger-cut fries generally take close to 20 minutes or longer to cook. Adjust your cook time as needed.

DIRECTIONS

Set air fryer to 380 degrees Fahrenheit and allow to preheat for 10 minutes.

Pat the fries dry with a paper towel (wet fries = soggy fries), then place in a zip-top baggie and drizzle with the oil and seasonings. Toss to coat. Pull out the basket and basket holder of your air fryer. Add the fries to bottom of air fryer basket. Replace the basket and close the air fryer. Set the timer to 15 to 20 minutes. Be sure to shake the basket every 5 minutes or so to help the fries cook evenly.

To make the fry sauce, add all ingredients into a bowl and whisk to combine. Keep refrigerated until ready to use.

When the potatoes are crispy and cooked through, transfer the fries to a serving plate, sprinkle with a bit more salt to taste and don't forget your fry sauce for dipping. **BC'T**

Enjoy!

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