

ALI'S KITCHEN

Prepare Now for the Holidays

Three recipes can be made in advance, freeing up days later for visiting with family

Column and photos by Ali Carter, Wisconsin Potato Growers Auxiliary

Want to get a head start on family gatherings and make holiday dinners a little less overwhelming?

I have something extra special for you this month—not *one* recipe, but *three*! And, even more exciting is that each of these recipes is ideal for making in advance, freezing and having convenient

potato dishes on hand for the future.

Many potato recipes can be made in advance and successfully frozen. With a little bit of effort now, you free up your time for those days when you'd rather be visiting with your family than working in the kitchen.

FREEZER MASHED POTATOES

When making freezer mashed potatoes, there are two tricks that will guarantee a creamy, smooth result once the dish is reheated.

First, be sure that there is plenty of cream/milk and butter involved. The fat content is key to helping maintain the creamy mashed potato texture that we all love.

Second, use red potatoes. While russets are fabulous mashed, they are high in starch and tend to get grainy after being frozen. Instead, I prefer using a waxy potato. Red-skin potatoes are perfect for mashing and freezing.

INGREDIENTS:

Freezer Mashed Potatoes

- 5 lbs. red-skin potatoes
- 8 Tbsp. butter
- 8 oz. sour cream
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 1/4 cup whole milk
- salt, pepper and a bit of garlic powder to taste

DIRECTIONS

Wash and peel the potatoes.

Boil in a large pot of salted water until fork tender.

Drain potatoes and return to pot.

Add butter, sour cream, cream cheese, milk and seasonings.

Mash potatoes using a potato masher or hand mixer.

To freeze, place the mashed potatoes into your preferred freezer- and oven-safe casserole dish and allow them to cool completely. Once cooled, cut a piece of wax paper to fit over the top of the casserole dish.

Tightly cover the dish with aluminum foil and place in the freezer. Mashed potatoes will be just fine in the freezer for up to two months.

To reheat, allow the frozen mashed potatoes to thaw in the refrigerator for 1-2 days. Once thawed, bake them, covered, at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the potatoes are hot throughout.

FREEZER SCALLOPED POTATOES

While russets were not ideal for our freezer mashed potatoes, they work



just fine in this scalloped potato recipe. Yellows are also a delicious choice!

INGREDIENTS:

Freezer Scalloped Potatoes

- 4 lbs. russet potatoes
- 8 oz. Gruyere cheese (Swiss cheese can also be used here) shredded
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese shredded
- 4 cloves garlic (finely chopped)
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. thyme

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Peel and slice the potatoes to about 1/8-inch thick (a handheld mandoline comes in handy here).

Stir together the garlic, cream, salt, pepper and thyme.

Layer half the potatoes evenly onto the bottom of the baking dish.

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Sprinkle evenly with 1 cup of the Swiss cheese and 1/4 cup of the Parmesan cheese.

Pour half the cream and garlic mixture over the potatoes and cheese.

Repeat layers—the other half of the potatoes, the remaining 1 cup of Swiss cheese and 1/4 cup of Parmesan, and the remaining cream mixture.

DON'T BAKE FULLY

Bake in the oven, uncovered, for about 40 minutes. You do not want to fully cook the potatoes since you will be finishing the cooking process when you bake them again prior to serving.

To freeze, remove the whole casserole from the oven and place it quickly into the refrigerator. You want to stop the cooking process and quickly lower the temperature of the food for sanitary purposes.

Once cooled completely, cut a piece of wax paper to fit over the top of the casserole. Then, tightly cover the dish with aluminum foil and place the whole dish in the freezer.

Store the scalloped potatoes in the freezer for no longer than four weeks for best texture results.

To reheat when you're ready to eat the scalloped potatoes, simply pull the dish out of the freezer. You can thaw the potatoes in the refrigerator ahead of time or simply put the whole casserole into the oven straight out of the freezer.

I personally prefer to go straight from the freezer to the oven to save fridge space and have always had great results.

Bake thawed scalloped potatoes at 325 degrees for 30-40 minutes. Bake frozen scalloped potatoes at the same temperature, but for about 50-60 minutes.

FREEZER POTATO DINNER ROLLS

This potato roll recipe was featured in the May 2018 "Ali's Kitchen" column.

INGREDIENTS:

Freezer Potato Dinner Rolls

- 2 (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast packets
- 1 1/3 cups warm water
- 1 cup warm, plain mashed potatoes

- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup butter (softened & room temp.)
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tsp. salt
- 5-6 cups all-purpose flour

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in 2/3 cup warm water and set aside.

In an extra-large bowl, combine the mashed potatoes with the remaining 2/3 cup water, sugar, softened butter, eggs, cheese and salt.

Add the yeast mixture to the bowl, along with about 2 cups flour, and mix until smooth. Continue adding flour to the bowl until you have a soft, slightly sticky dough. You may not need the full 6 cups of flour.

Cover the dough with a kitchen towel or plastic wrap and allow it to rise until double in size. This will take about an hour.

Push dough down, re-cover it with the kitchen towel or plastic wrap and allow to rest for about 10 minutes.

Grease a baking pan with a pat or two of butter, or cooking spray, and set aside.

SHAPE DOUGH INTO BALLS

Pull portions of the dough, shape into balls and place on to the prepared baking pans. You should be able to get about 40 potato rolls from this dough.

To freeze, place balls of dough on greased baking sheets, cover with plastic wrap and freeze until firm. Once frozen, transfer to plastic bags. The dough can be kept frozen for up to four weeks.

To bake and serve, remove the preferred number of frozen rolls from the freezer and place them on greased baking sheets.

Cover loosely with a clean kitchen towel, place in a warm area and allow the dough to thaw and rise for about 1 1/2 hours.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes.

Enjoy some great holiday food with your families and friends! **BCT**

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