



DISHING IT UP WITH DANA

Patriotic Picnic Cake & Potato Gratin Are Perfect Match

The beauty of comfort food and holiday flair are combined to palatable perfection in recipe duo

Column and photos by Dana Rady, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association

I love to cook, bake, and simply be in the kitchen. Honestly, I would rather clean up the kitchen than fold the laundry. The tradition of cooking and my love of being in that space in my house go back a few generations.

Hello! My name is Dana Rady. You may know me as the promotions director of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA). I also serve as the director of the United Potato Growers Cooperative of Wisconsin.

What you might not know, however, is that I grew up in Tomah and was a most pleasant surprise for my parents, back in 1982, when they learned they were expecting a fourth child behind three older daughters, aged 11, 12 and 13. Consequently, I earned the nickname “caboose” from my grandfather.

A very German lineage from both my parents’ families, I follow a long line of strong personalities—men who lead and stand firm and women who are just as stubborn and determined to persevere.

Although a bit opposite in character and personality, I was blessed to know my two amazing grandmothers who were each phenomenal in the kitchen.

My feisty paternal grandmother had

a heart of gold, but you wouldn’t want to cross her. She also made one of the most amazing coleslaws ever! Like any truly good dish, it was only a “recipe” in her head that she made with love, and it never tasted right when we tried to make it ourselves.

My mom’s mother was very quiet, always positive and incredible at sewing and anything that involved cooking or baking. I particularly cherish memories of her casseroles, breads, cookies and desserts.

DECORATING COOKIES

Growing up, she would let me help decorate her homemade Christmas cutout cookies. She would frost, I would make them look gaudy with too much sugar, and we would deliver them to residents at the local nursing home, where her mother (my great grandmother) also resided.

Ever since these cherished childhood memories, I have often found myself experimenting in the kitchen. I’d either modify existing recipes or get inspired in the aisles of a grocery store, buying ingredients I thought would go good together and taking them home to get cooking or baking.

While my creations certainly wouldn’t take first place in a contest, cooking and baking have always been therapeutic and relaxing.



I was blessed and humbled to have been asked to succeed Ali Carter with this column, and I tip my hat to her. For years, she welcomed you into her home and shared experiences along with her favorite potato dishes. She has left some big shoes to fill, and I can only hope that you come to enjoy the recipes I share as much as you did hers.

Having not grown up in agriculture, I have certainly learned a ton about the potato and vegetable industry in my almost 13 years of employment. However, even prior to coming to WPVGA, my family and I loved potatoes. I will say, though, that working at the association has opened my eyes to additional creative ways in which they can be used.

This brings me to two recipes I decided to try this year for the 4th of July holiday—Red, White and Blue Potato Gratin, and Patriotic Picnic Cake.

Together, these dishes are a delectable combination of comfort food at its finest, with the iconic flair of Independence Day. I challenge you to only take one bite of each. My in-home taste testers couldn’t!

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INGREDIENTS: Red, White and Blue Potato Gratin

- 1 package refrigerated pie crusts (14.1 ounces, 2 crusts)
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups shredded gouda cheese
- 1 lb. blue potatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. white potatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. red potatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 1/2 tsps. garlic salt
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup Italian flavored Panko breadcrumbs
- 3 large fresh basil leaves sliced in thin strips
- 12 ounces sour cream (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Using a 9-inch springform pan, unroll pie crusts onto a floured surface and roll each out to a 14-inch circle.

Sprinkle one crust with chopped basil, ground pepper and some cheese. Cover it with the other crust and press into the bottom and up the sides of the springform pan. Fold under edges of crust to make even with rim of the pan and refrigerate for 20 minutes.

Next, evenly layer blue potatoes in bottom of chilled crust and top with cheese. Then layer white potatoes and top with cheese. Top with a layer of red potatoes and sprinkle with cheese. Repeat until the layers of potatoes reach the top of the springform pan.

In a small bowl, microwave garlic salt and cream on high for 50 seconds and pour over potatoes in pan. Sprinkle with cheese and breadcrumbs.

Cover the pan with foil and bake for 1 hour at 425 degrees. Uncover and bake for an additional 20-30 minutes or until potatoes are fork tender and topping is browned.

Serve with a dollop of sour cream and basil strips.

For good measure, here is the recipe and ingredients for Patriotic Picnic Cake. It was so fun to use mashed



potatoes in this dish and see how full and fluffy they made the cake batter. It was even more fun tasting it! And spoiler alert—this dessert is light and versatile enough to feature anytime, even if it's not on a specific holiday.

INGREDIENTS: Patriotic Picnic Cake

- 3/4 cup mashed Wisconsin white or white-fleshed red potatoes
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 16 ounces one-step Angel Food White Cake Mix
- 1/2 cup Wisconsin blue mashed potatoes
- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 Tbsp. butter, softened
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup heavy cream, whipped
- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place the 3/4 cup mashed potatoes in a large mixing bowl. Gradually beat 1/4 cup of the water into the potatoes, beating until smooth. Add remaining water, 1 teaspoon vanilla and cake mix. Mix just until blended.

Pour mixture into an ungreased 9x13x2-inch cake pan. Bake until deep golden brown, about 30 minutes. Cool completely.

To prepare topping, combine blue mashed potatoes and cream cheese in a medium bowl. Beat until smooth. Add powdered sugar and butter. Beat until well blended. Stir in remaining vanilla and fold in whipped cream.

Spread mixture over cooled cake. Chill several hours or overnight.

Before serving, top with strawberries. **BCT**

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