



DISHING IT UP WITH DANA

Hasselback Potatoes Combine Crunchy & Chewy

Fresh garlic confit fills the mouth with flavor and kitchen with a pleasant, pungent aroma

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

There is something about a particular food being crunchy on the outside and chewy on the inside that gets me every time, especially when it's warm and packed with flavor.

If you are like me in that regard, cutting Hasselback potatoes is one preparation method you won't want to miss trying in your own kitchen.

To Hasselback means cutting thin slices into a fruit or vegetable, but only slicing three-quarters of the way through the produce as opposed to all the way. The result is a fruit or vegetable remaining whole at the bottom while it fans out at the top.

This allows for getting any added flavor into the middle of the food as well as on the outside.

Besides the combination of crunchy and chewy, I also happen to love garlic. Fresh garlic has some amazing health benefits that include lowering blood pressure, improving cholesterol as well as heart, liver and kidney health, and helping to prevent cognitive decline.

Garlic is also good for the immune system and has anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and anti-tumor properties.

FANTASTIC DISH

That's why "Hasselback Potatoes & Garlic Confit" is a fantastic dish! It combines crunchy and chewy with a fresh garlic flavor and the healthy fats of America's favorite

vegetable. This is also a great dish to prepare for any occasion. Does it get much better?

The term confit (pronounced cone-fee) refers to cooking food slowly in fat and at a low temperature. This cooking technique comes from the French verb that means "to preserve." So, confit can also be applied to preserving meats by cooking them in their own fat.

One important note about this recipe is to place whole garlic cloves in the oil and butter mixture. The slow cooking of garlic in the mixture helps to infuse it with garlicky flavor while the cloves soften. It smells so good when cooking that I might be making this garlic confit and using it in other recipes besides my potatoes!

Also, if you don't trust yourself to not cut all the way through the potato, a good tip is to use two

narrow-handled wooden spoons or chopsticks, placing them down flat on either side of the potato and stopping each slice as soon as your knife edge touches the utensils.

Once the slices are made and confit is prepared, the rest is just a matter of setting a timer on the oven and filling the slices with a healthy fat and garlic confit mixture after various cooking intervals.

I don't see this as tedious, but as an opportunity to get more things done in the process, whether it's house duties or preparing other food items for a meal.

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Hasselback Potatoes & Garlic Confit

INGREDIENTS:

4-6 **medium potatoes (yellow or russet)**

Coarse kosher salt

Freshly-ground black pepper

½ cup **light olive oil or neutral oil**

4 Tbsp **unsalted butter**

½ cup **garlic cloves, peeled but left whole**

few sprigs of thyme



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I also love the fresh thyme in this recipe. It's so pungent and offers a nice pop of color, especially if preparing the dish over the holidays!

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oven to 425° Fahrenheit / 220° C with a rack in the lower-middle position.

Make the garlic confit: Heat the oil and unsalted butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat until it reaches 220 degrees.

Reduce the heat to low, add the thyme sprigs and garlic, and cook until they are soft and lightly golden brown, 20-25 minutes. It should be lightly bubbling away but not spitting oil or smoking.

Take the thyme out after 15 minutes or so (it will have given up all its flavor and just gotten dark).

Make sure to keep the temperature below 260 degrees or the confit can burn.

Stir the garlic occasionally to make sure the cloves brown evenly. Set aside to cool.

Scrub the potatoes clean and pat them dry with a paper towel.

HASSELBACK POTATOES

Cut slits 1/8- to 1/4-inch apart in the potato, stopping just above

the bottom so that the slices stay connected (see tip in the copy, on previous page, about using chopsticks or wooden spoons to aid in this procedure).

Arrange the potatoes cut side up in a baking dish or cast-iron skillet. Brush the potatoes all over with the garlic oil, including the bottoms (don't try to get oil in the slits yet). Sprinkle the potatoes generously with salt and pepper. Bake the potatoes for 30 minutes.

At this point, the layers will begin to separate. Remove the pan from the oven and brush the potatoes again with the garlic oil. You can gently open the layers slightly if they're still sticking together. Make sure to get the oil down into the space between the slices.

Bake for another 20-30 minutes until the potatoes start to crisp on the edges.

Remove the pan from the oven once more and tuck four or five roasted garlic cloves between the slits of each potato (every few leaves should get a clove).

Return to the oven and bake another 10-20 minutes until the edges are crisp and brown and the center can be easily pierced with a paring knife.

Serve immediately while hot and crispy! **BCT**

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