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SUNDAY SUPPER

Pick the right potato for the job

According to my father, supper wasn't a meal without potatoes, and we ate them every night when I was growing up — boiled new potatoes, mashed Idaho potatoes (my father loved them mixed with browned onions), roasted red potatoes. Potato pancakes, potato salad and potato kugel (one giant potato pancake) were menu standards, too.

I still love potatoes, and the growing number of heirloom and specialty varieties is making them more versatile than ever.

What distinguishes one potato from another is the amount of starch and moisture they contain. For potato salad, for example, you need one that holds its shape after boiling. With their lower level of starch and crisp, waxy texture, red and new potatoes fit the bill.

Starchy russet or Idaho potatoes would fall apart if you used them in potato salad, but they're ideal for baking, frying and mashing.

The long white potato, which looks like a russet except for its thin, light-colored skin, is a great all-purpose potato, fine for boiling, baking, roasting — you name it.

Round white potatoes have a medium level of starch and are a good choice for mashing because they develop a creamy texture when cooked.

Specialty varieties like the fingerling are readily available in supermarkets today. It has a finger-like appearance and is actually a very young tuber. It is a low- to medium-starch potato well-suited to boiling, frying, steaming, grilling and roasting.

The yellow-fleshed Yukon Gold has a buttery flavor that takes beautifully to mashing. The thin-skinned, thumb-shaped Peruvian blue potato has a firm texture. It's excellent steamed, baked or microwaved, and adds a distinctive look to any dish.

Stored properly in a cool, dry, dark place, potatoes should last 2 to 3 weeks. If they're packaged in a plastic bag, transfer them to a basket or other container that allows air circulation. Don't store them with onions, which give off a gas that can hasten their decay.

Carole Kotkin is manager of the Ocean Reef Club cooking school and co-author of "Mmmmiami: Tempting Tropical Tastes for Home Cooks Everywhere."



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MAIN DISH

STOUT-BRAISED CLAMS WITH POTATO, FENNEL AND BACON

Serve this straight from the pot with crusty bread.

A creamy chardonnay such as the Raymond Reserve 2009 ($19.99) would pair well with the plump clams. The wine's acidity would balance the sweet saltiness of the bacon.

- **¼ pound thick-cut, maple-cured bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- **¼ pound fingerling potatoes (about 4), cut into ½-inch chunks**
- **½ small white onion, cut into ½-inch chunks**
- **1 fennel bulb, halved, cored and cut into ½-inch chunks (reserve and chop fronds)**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper**
- **24 littleneck clams, well-scrubbed**
- **1 cup stout**
- **1 cup chicken stock**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**

Fry the bacon in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until crispy, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. Add the potatoes to the bacon fat and cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, until they get a little color and start to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the onion, fennel, garlic and pepper, and cook until soft, about 5 minutes.

Raise the heat to high. Add the clams, stout and chicken stock. Give everything a good stir and cover the pot. Steam until the clams open, 5 to 8 minutes, discarding any that do not open. Stir in the butter and sprinkle on the chopped fennel fronds. Makes 4 servings.

Source: Adapted from "Michael's Genuine Food" by Michael Schwartz and Joann Cianciulli (Clarkson Potter, $35).

Per serving: 330 calories (42 percent from fat), 15.4 g fat(6.6 g saturated fat, 5.5 g monounsaturated fat), 64 mg cholesterol, 23 g protein, 20.7 g carbohydrates, 2.6 g fiber, 1082 mg sodium.


Fridge biscuits make dandy donuts, fans attest

Pick the right potato for the pot

Free

Publix.

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"MICHAEL'S GENUINE FOOD" (CLARKSON POTTER)

STOUT-BRAISED CLAMS

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