

How to Make an Old-fashioned Potato Soup

by Pamela Fay

Pick up a recipe book from the Great Depression era, and you're likely to see a recipe for basic potato soup. Potato soup is a quintessential comfort food that is as economical as it is versatile. Once you master a good potato soup, you can create many other types of soup simply by changing the stock or adding combinations of your favorite vegetables, meats, seafood and garnishes. Try this potato soup alongside simple foods and bold tastes, like grilled cheese sandwiches on artisan bread with a vibrant fruit salad on the side.

You'll need:

- Large saucepan
- Blender
- 4 slices center-cut bacon
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large sweet onion
- 1 stalk celery
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 cup fat-free evaporated milk
- 2 ½ pounds yellow potatoes
- 2 cans reduced sodium chicken broth
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Shredded cheddar cheese (optional)

Place the bacon in the cold large saucepan. Cook over medium heat until the bacon no longer sticks to the pan and is easy to turn. Continue cooking and turning until golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels. Set the bacon aside for use later. Turn off the burner. Leave 1 tbsp. of bacon drippings in the saucepan and discard the rest.

Peel and mince the onion and garlic cloves. Chop the celery. Heat the remaining bacon drippings in a large saucepan over medium heat. Saute the onion and celery until tender, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic in the last 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat as you prepare the potatoes.

Scrub and peel the potatoes, removing any blemishes with a paring knife. Cut them into a large dice.

Add the milk, potatoes and chicken broth to the saucepan. Crumble the bacon into the pan. Bring the soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover the pan and reduce the heat to low. Simmer for approximately 35 minutes or until the potatoes are fork-tender. Let the soup sit for a few minutes to cool slightly.

Strain the soup through a fine mesh sieve. Puree the contents of the sieve in a blender. Put the potato puree back in the pot.

Bring the soup back to a simmer. Stir in sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Serve the soup in large bowls. This basic soup is good garnished with cheese or an olive tapenade.

Tips:

If you don't have a blender, use a potato masher on the contents of the sieve. The result will be a chunky texture.

Warning:

Take care while pureeing the hot potato mixture. Open the center stopper in the blender lid so that steam can escape. Cover the opening with a clean towel while you are processing. If the lid does not have an opening, do not blend the soup until it stops steaming.

References

“Caprial’s Soups and Sandwiches”; Caprial Pence and Mark Dowers; 1998

“Grandma Jo’s Soup Kettle”; JoAnna M. Lund; 1999