

POTATOES

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Place the servings on a parchment covered baking sheet and flash them in a hot oven for 5 to 10 minutes, just to warm them through, and, voila, a beautiful side dish that's as French as Edith Piaf eating a snail.

James P. DeWan is a culinary instructor at Kendall College in Chicago and the author of "Prep School," a collection of his columns available here, and co-author of "Zwilling J.A. Henckels Complete Book of Knife Skills."



Terrence Antonio James/Chicago-Tribune-TNS

POMMES DAUPHINOISE

Prep: 15 minutes
Cook: 45 - 50 minutes
Makes: 8 servings

Our culinary students at Kendall College make this dish as part of their practical exam. It's delicious right out of the oven, but if you have time to make it in advance, refrigerate it overnight after baking. The next day — or up

Assembling the ingredients for Pommes dauphinoise.

to three days later — cut it into squares or rounds before reheating and it will hold its shape for an elegant presentation.

- 2 cups heavy cream or 1 cup each cream and milk or 2 cups half and half
- 1 clove garlic, minced

- 1½ teaspoons salt, or to taste
- ½ teaspoon white pepper, or to taste
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 2 pounds russet or Yukon gold potatoes, peeled

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Place dairy product, garlic, salt, white pepper and nutmeg in a heavy-bottomed, ovenproof

saute pan or skillet. Bring to a simmer over medium high heat.

2. While mixture comes to a simmer, slice the potatoes into 1/8-inch thick rounds on a mandoline or with a very sharp knife. Do not store them in water as that will wash away some of the starch.

3. Stir the potatoes into the

simmering liquid. The liquid should cover the potatoes by about 1/2 inch. This will lower the temperature a bit. When the liquid returns to a simmer, about 5 minutes, taste for seasoning. It's now ready to go into the oven; leave it in the skillet or pour the entire contents into a greased baking pan.

- 4. Bake uncovered until potatoes are tender and brown on top, 40 to 45 minutes. If the potatoes are tender but have no color, increase the oven temperature to 450 degrees and continue baking until browned on top, 5 to 10 minutes.
- 5. Rest dauphinoise 15 to 30 minutes before serving or refrigerate up to three days. To serve after refrigeration, cut potatoes into squares or rounds and place in a 500-degree oven until heated through, 5 to 10 minutes.

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CARROTS

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They are delicious raw or cooked, and they deliver an impressive list of nutrients, especially beta carotene. Raw carrots make a healthy sweet snack, add crunch to salads or can be juiced to create nutritious drinks. What would a hardy winter stew be without carrots? Cooked carrots are featured in many savory and sweet dishes, plus there is always the favorite carrot cake, muffins and carrot cookies.

Bagged commercial carrots cannot begin to compare to the full richness of a home-grown variety.

Carrots were cultivated in the Middle East for more than 3,000 years — first being grown for their greens and seeds, which resemble celery seeds in size and flavor.

Did you know that the major percentage of U.S. domestic

market carrot variety seed production is grown in the Madras and Culver area? Smaller percentages for the U.S. market are also being grown in Crook and Deschutes counties. A significant percentage of seed production reaches the global market.

According to an Oregon State University fact sheet, most of the carrot seed is hybrid with male and female plants that cross-pollinate through honeybees brought in to increase seed vigor.

The seed production fields are grown from seeds planted in August or from roots called stockings planted in the spring. Harvest takes place in September.

Carrots grow best in moderate weather in a sunny location. A spring planting can be followed by a summer sowing for harvest in fall. Carrots that mature in cool fall soil develop more sweetness.

The soil should be free of rocks, clods or other obstructions to avoid misshapen roots. Raised beds are ideal because they increase the depth of available root space. Deeply dug in-ground beds (12 inches deep) also benefit carrots by providing cooler soil temperatures below the surface.

Rake the soil and mark off rows, incorporate a balanced fertilizer into the bottom of a 4-inch-deep furrow. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizer (the first two is higher than the other), which will cause the roots to fork. Refill the furrow with loose soil. Plant carrot seeds 1/4-inch deep and 1 inch apart. Rows should be spaced 8 inches apart.

Maintaining moisture is critical to germination. Rows can be covered with row cover until germination takes place. Carrots require attentive weeding and need to be thinned when seedlings reach 2 inches. Thin

to approximately 3 inches apart to develop straight roots of good size. Rather than thin the rows by pulling the seedlings out, which disrupts the roots of nearby seedlings, cut the seedling at ground level. Small craft scissors or cuticle scissors work perfectly. Fertilize lightly when about 8 inches tall.

Carrot rust fly can be a problem. Onions are often interplanted with carrots. The smell of the onion is believed to deter the carrot fly. The fly can also be fenced off with netting, plastic or row cover. The barrier should be at least 2 feet high. Earth up the soil at the base. Female carrot flies seem incapable of flying any higher than 18 inches.

Black, yellow and green parsley worms are often seen munching carrot foliage. These are the larvae of eastern black swallowtail butterflies, which are valuable pollinators, so many gardeners tolerate light

damage. You can also plant parsley nearby to lure the caterpillars away.

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FLOWERS

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I'm sure you will recognize it from the florist trade. Please handle the brittle roots gently when transplanting. It can also be grown easily from seed.

Impatiens seem overused, but it still stops me dead in my tracks to see a huge display of vibrant color in the shade.

Container plants for sun

The classic container plant is the geranium. I thought it would be trite, but I loved the pot (containing 6 plants) I grew on my porch. It was my first attempt, a common plant, and I still got lots of raves. To grow a geranium for beauty and bloom, you must become ruthless. Don't even let half of the blooms of the cluster fade before you pick off the entire cluster where it attaches to the stem. Fertilize with liquid fertilizer with a large middle number (I think Miracle Gro would be OK), mix it half strength and use it twice as often — say every other water-

ing. Keep it damp, not wet, and it will forgive you if it gets a little dry sometimes. You can even use a terra cotta pot.

Marigolds, lobelia, petunias, summer bulbs such as alliums, a ground cover, can all be grown in separate pots, or combined as a "color bowl" for porch or patio, or steps.

Camellia, azalea, mums, hydrangea, cactus, succulents, roses. Try a blooming vine for vertical color such as black-eyed Suzi (thunbergia), snail vine, mandevilla, honeysuckle, cypress, cardinal, morning glory, bougainvillea, trumpet vines, or clematis, ivy, moon flower, jasmine, scarlet runner bean, wisteria.

Summer annuals

Marigolds, lobelia, petunias, summer bulbs such as alliums, snapdragons, phlox, calendula, nasturtium, nemesia, dianthus, scarlet salvia, and verbena.

Try not to re-use potting soil from year to year. Don't waste it, though. Put the old soil on your compost so that any overwintering diseases or fungus can be killed by the heat. Wood shavings can

be mixed with potting soil if they are already well-rotted. If the shavings are fresh, use them on top of the soil as a mulch to help retain moisture.

Perennials for sun

If you use iris, you'll want to mix them in with other plants, as iris bloom time is short. However, the iris leaves have a strong, pointy vertical which adds interest and texture to the bed.

Classics to consider are roses. Each variety of rose has a different growth habit to consider. You would want short shrub roses or ground covers in front of a window, for instance. Purple coneflowers and yarrow, rudbeckia comes in many colors.

Morel mushrooms will soon be popping up. Leave a few in the area when you pick so that they can disperse spores to increase the population. There are usually a few that are too ripe anyway.

If you have garden comments or questions, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

they needed to be kept separate but available. Lying out flat by the manufacturer and no longer needing to be rolled into balls for use, took up too much room by my chair so I needed to find a way to save space.

The answer came as I finished using the grains for my morning mush breakfast from the many years my mother served us traditional Quaker Oats from the tall and round container, now just fitting the upended skein of yarn.

Scrounging around, I located two others stored for

their possible new use. They worked perfectly, even fitted with a lid for storage against dust.

Standing round and tall beside my chair and filled with the three yarn skeins of different colors, the strings pulled out with ease to aid in my work.

The life extended by these sturdy re-usable containers served me in many ways — memories of my mother's cooking, good health, conservation, and relaxation.

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DORY

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That's why my father's discarded angleworm tin with a lift-up lid became a grand piano in my upended two-sectioned wooden apple-box dollhouse and why refitted hand-me-down clothing deserved a new life in another person's closet.

Sole-shaped linoleum pieces became shoe inserts against holes worn in the bottom during the worst of the Big Depression days when conservation was the way to live.

This may sound depressing, but it wasn't. We found pride and adventure in developing yet another way to extend life for what might seem unusable to the present generation.

This thought came to mind a few months ago when I decided to crochet an afghan for Halloween décor in two shades of brown and one of orange. The fact that it didn't get finished until after Thanksgiving becomes unimportant — at least it did get finished.

When I started the project of three different color yarns,

they needed to be kept separate but available. Lying out flat by the manufacturer and no longer needing to be rolled into balls for use, took up too much room by my chair so I needed to find a way to save space.

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