

How To Make Potato Salad

by Steve Himmer

1. Decide to make potato salad.
2. Boil 8-10 red potatoes and 6 eggs in heavily salted water. Remember that the first chef you worked under taught you to salt egg-boiling water because the salt breaks down membranes between shell and meat, making the egg easier to peel later on. Decide that was the best job you've ever had.
3. While eggs and potatoes boil, think about doing some writing. Decide to make Rice Krispie squares instead. Remember that the restaurant was named after a character in a novel you've never read, and that she was a prostitute. Laugh about that. Decide to read the novel, and mean it this time. Remember mixing potato salad in plastic garbage pails, with your arms up to the elbows in mayonnaise and balsamic vinegar. Realize you'd never heard of balsamic vinegar before learning to make potato salad according to your first chef's recipe.
4. Dice half of a red onion and sauté it in olive oil. Add 4 cloves of minced garlic. Note that cooking the onions is not part of chef's recipe, but do it anyway. While getting garlic from the refrigerator, notice most of a six-pack. Wonder if it's too early to start drinking yet. Imagine what Miss Manners would say:

Dear Miss Manners,

At what time is it appropriate for one to open the first beer of the day?

Signed, Thirsty

Dear Thirsty,

There's no single specific time that is appropriate, and there are certain times of the year at which drinking earlier is more

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acceptable. But if you find yourself struggling to resist the “first beer of the day,” you might consider trying to not drink it at all. Alcohol should be an occasional... wait, what are... you couldn't even wait until I finished answering? How crass!

Decide that Ms. Manners is a fuddy duddy. Wonder if you've ever called anyone a “fuddy duddy” before, and if that means you're becoming one, too.

5. Remove potatoes and eggs from heat. Drain and leave in the sink to cool. Open the first beer of the day. Give Miss Manners the finger, wherever she is.

6. Add 3 smoked sausages (thinly sliced) to the onions and garlic over medium heat, tossing the pan occasionally. Think about the first time you had potato salad with sausage in it, in Germany. Remember how nice Stuttgart was at Christmas, and how long it's been since you spoke to your friends there. Think about other friends you fell out of touch with, and wonder how you might reach them. Wonder, too, if you ever ate potato salad in Finland while visiting other friends you haven't talked to in years. Try to remember how long it's been since the restaurant you first worked in went out of business, and what all the other people who worked there are doing now.

7. Remove onions, garlic, and sausages from heat. Decide that if you ever open a restaurant, you will also name it after a hooker. Forget that the pan is still hot and pick it up without a side towel. Blister.

8. Chop the potatoes and put them in a big bowl. Open the second beer of the day. Think that Miss Manners may know more than you gave her credit for, but also think that a cold bottle brings welcome relief to burnt fingers.

9. Peel the eggs using the palm-rolling motion chef taught you when you were 14. Remember when you wanted to be a chef. Decide that

yes, maybe you would like to open a restaurant someday.. Roughly chop the eggs and add them to the bowl, then add the cooled onion, garlic, and sausage.

10. Add a dollop of mayonnaise to the bowl. Wonder who came up with the word “dollop.” Add a spoonful of Dijon mustard and a few shakes of balsamic vinegar. Add a bit more balsamic vinegar. Mix it all up using the mahogany spoon you carved when you moved to Maine because you wanted to build wooden boats for a living. Try to remember how many things you've wanted to do for a living. Wonder what you're going to do for a living.

11. S & P tt. Laugh about how much you've always enjoyed the rhyme of “S & P tt.” Remember how many things were funny at your first job, in the restaurant named after a prostitute. Remember Herb & Onion bread, and the superhero you invented named Urban Onion, and remember that you never thought of any powers for Urban Onion to have, only a name. Remember how saying “86 the clam chowder” felt so precise, like you were a surgeon, and that working as an observer of heart surgeries performed by famous doctors wasn't half as much fun as making potato salad in a restaurant named for a woman who didn't really exist.

12. Sit on the couch watching Food TV with an enormous bowl of potato salad beside you. Open the third beer of the day. Remember when you opened your first.

