

February 2020

## POTATOES THAT TRAVELED FROM HERE TO THERE:



**Burmese Soy and Potato Curry**

**Czech-Style Mushroom Soup with Poached Eggs**

**English Cream of Potato and Parsnip Soup  
with Parmesan**

**Spanish Fried Potatoes**

**Swedish Oven-Roasted *Hasselback* Potatoes**

I suppose when considering the journey of the potato one has to consider its travels from its point of origin, probably in present day Peru, north to the place we now call home. Many of us consider potatoes to be an indispensable part of the Thanksgiving menu unaware that the tubers were not yet a North American crop in 1621 or that the potato did not just travel directly North from South America. The circuitous journey of that humble vegetable is really quite remarkable.

The Spanish introduced the South American tuber to sub-Saharan Africa in 1538. Evidence confirms that the potato was introduced into cultivation in the Canary Islands c. 1565. A record of delivery from Las Palmas in the Grand Canaries to Antwerp, Belgium, confirms an early introduction into continental Europe. By 1570 potatoes had entered Spain when sailors returned from the Andes carrying the remains of the food that they had gathered in South America in preparation for their journey home. Potatoes arrived in the British Isles between 1588 and 1593. The potato was in common use in northern Italy for animal fodder and as part of the human diet by 1601. At about the same time, as the Spanish armies moved across Europe, potatoes followed to provision the army. Populations they encountered welcomed and planted the new food.

Beginning in about 1600 the potato began its journey across Central Asia becoming a major food resource. Soon the potato spread into western China. It is said that it was a food greatly prized by the Imperial family. Within years the potato's presence in China was far more widespread because it was also being introduced by the Portuguese as they traveled the world. Those who have been surprised to find potatoes in Chinese and Himalayan cuisines will now understand that the potato was entering the cuisines of China and Southeast Asia from the West and was also spreading from the East. The earliest record of the potato in the Indian Subcontinent is 1675 so you can clearly see how fast the potato was gaining acceptance.



The potato came to the American Colonies not from South America but from Europe, specifically from Ireland, hence the term "Irish potatoes." The earliest record of potatoes under cultivation in the northeastern United States dates a crop to 1719 in Londonderry, New Hampshire. Shipping records show a shipment containing potatoes from the governor of Bermuda to the Virginia Colonies in the 1620s but there is no record, however, how these were disposed of and whether or not any of those spuds were planted. One finds, perhaps quite unexpectedly, that it took quite a while for the potato to reach the Thanksgiving tables of Massachusetts.

During a summer visit to Portugal in the 1970s, shortly after the end of the colonial wars in Africa as Portugal's colonies moved to independence, we were served vegetable soups almost every day. These vegetable soups were very unique in our experience. They were really potato purée with vegetables—arriving at the table topped with green beans, it was green bean soup; topped with carrots, it was carrot soup; then, broccoli; then, corn; then, spinach, and so it went. I have included two soups this month that show a bit more imagination.

I have also included Spanish fried potatoes which are also a very basic approach to the potato but, oh so much better than fast food French fried potatoes. You will be hard pressed to serve plain old baked potatoes once you have tried Swedish *hasselback* potatoes. A sprinkling of shredded Cheddar cheese makes them even more irresistible. On the other hand, the curry from Myanmar is a main course dish with complex spicing that the potato willingly accepts.

## BURMESE SOY AND POTATO CURRY

TPT - 39 minutes

*Curry powder, created by those who lived in Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent during the British Imperial Period, led to a continued British devotion the spicy food that can be seen in “take-away” all over Britain. Curry, a corruption of the Tamil word kari, would simply mean food, generally meat, if it were not for its collateral meaning which includes the spices and aesthetics of that food. The food with its seasoning is known as curry today; the mixture of spices added to the food has been homogenized into the word curry, ground, and sold everywhere as curry as if all dishes would be seasoned with the same spice mixture. Curried dishes still are the main meal for millions of Indian Hindus, Pakistani Moslems, Malaysians, and those who live in Myanmar, formerly Burma.*

*The desire for the treasure of spices from this part of the world drove world exploration and some of us are still exploring. Don't be afraid to experiment with the spices. Add a little more of this, a little less of that; any mixture can be the perfect curry.*

- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric**
- 1/4 teaspoon Spanish *smoked* paprika**
- 1/2 crushed, dried oregano**
- 1/4 teaspoon dried onion powder**
  
- 4 ounces *frozen* soy meat analogue strips—defrosted and chopped into bite-sized pieces.**
  
- 1 tablespoon *high-heat* safflower oil**
  
- 1/2 cup *finely* chopped onion**
- 1 large garlic clove—*very finely* chopped**
- 1 teaspoon *very finely* chopped fresh gingerroot**
  
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin**
- 3/4 teaspoon ground coriander**
- 3/4 teaspoon paprika**
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom**
- 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper (cayenne), or to taste**
- 1/8 teaspoon salt, or to taste**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*)  
or parsley, if preferred**
  
- 3/4 cup water**
- 2 small waxy potatoes—preferably Russet or Yukon Gold—peeled, and cut into eighths to yield about 1-inch pieces**
  
- 10 whole *frozen* green beans**



In a pie plate, ground turmeric, *smoked* paprika, dried oregano, and onion powder.

Add soy meat pieces. Roll them in the seasoning mixture. Set aside briefly.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add chopped onion and *very finely* chopped garlic and gingerroot. Sauté for 3-4 minutes, *being careful not to allow any of the vegetables to brown.*

Add seasoned soy meat, ground cumin, ground coriander, paprika, ground cardamom ground red pepper (cayenne), salt, and chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*) or parsley. Stir constantly for about 2 minutes to allow the release of oil from the spices.

Add water and potatoes and bring to the boil. *Reduce heat to LOW-MEDIUM*, cover, and allow to simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add *frozen* green beans. Allow to simmer for about 5 minutes more. Turn into a heated serving bowl.

Serve with steamed Mekong flower rice, red rice, or Japanese short-grained rice.



Yields 4 servings  
adequate for 2 people

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of rice) –  
PROTEIN = 13.0 g.; FAT = 5.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.2 g.;  
CALORIES = 149; CALORIES FROM FAT = 32%

## CZECH-STYLE MUSHROOM SOUP WITH POACHED EGGS *Polevka Houby s Vejci*

TPT - 27 minutes

*Of course, you can make a mushroom soup from scratch with freshly gathered or dried mushrooms but there are fine canned mushroom soups in your market that can make this a taste adventure without the whole “hunting-gathering” bit and it is a whole lot safer “if you don’t know your [edible] mushrooms from your toadstools,” as my grandmother would say. This is an easy, quickly-prepared way to achieve the unmistakable taste of Prague but with the advantage of canned mushroom soup with porcini mushrooms. The hunting, collecting, identifying, drying, rehydration, and simmering of mushrooms has been done for you. However, you may want to add a couple of tablespoonfuls of porcini kibble to enhance the flavor but don’t eliminate the potato; that is what makes this very distinctly Czech.*

**1 medium potato—peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice**  
**1 quart boiling water**

**1 can organic porcini bisque or organic cream of mushroom soup**  
**1/2 cup light cream or half and half**

**2 large eggs**

Warm large soup plates.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, parboil diced potato in *boiling* water for 10 minutes. Drain. Set potatoes aside briefly.

To dry saucepan, add canned soup and cream. Using a wire whisk, combine well. Add parboiled potatoes. Set over *MEDIUM* heat. Using a wooden spoon, stir frequently while bringing to the boil.

Meanwhile, poach the eggs. Slide a poached egg into the center of each heated soup plate. Ladle hot soup over the eggs.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 2 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled easily, when required.



1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 11.1 g.; FAT = 17.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 25.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 303; CALORIES FROM FAT = 52%

## ENGLISH CREAM OF POTATO AND PARSNIP SOUP WITH PARMESAN

TPT - 1 hour and 13 minutes

*Parsnips are not a favorite of he with whom I have journeyed this life. Although we both enjoy them as an element in a roasted vegetable mixture, there are always a couple leftover after the holidays. When he passed by my desk and saw that I was working on this recipe, his immediate comment was, "You can skip the parsnips as far as I'm concerned." Ray's family lived in a big city during the years of World War II; they had choices. My family, up on Lake Ontario, were more dependent upon the foods that were harvested from our "victory gardens." Parsnips are easily grown and did quite well in the root cellar so we found ways to use them. I wondered how this soup would be received and was amazed by the overwhelmingly positive reception.*



**3/4 cup diced potato—about 1 medium potato**

**1/2 cup diced parsnip—about 1 small parsnip**

**1/4 cup *finely* chopped onion**

**3 large lovage leaves—chopped\***

**1 small chopped fresh sage leaf**

**1 1/2 cups water**

**1/2 teaspoon salt**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

**1 1/2 teaspoons butter**

**2 small *frozen* soy sausages—cut in 1/4-inch slices**

**2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese**

**1/2 cup *whole* milk**

In the kettle with cover, combine diced potato and parsnip, *finely* chopped onion and knob celery root, water, salt, and pepper. Set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat and bring to the boil. Reduce heat to *MEDIUM-LOW*, partially cover, and simmer for about 45 minutes, or until vegetables are *very tender*. Remove from heat and allow the soup to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, in a small skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Sauté sausage slices until heated through and light browned. Remove from heat and set aside until required.

Purée two or three ladlefuls at a time in the electric blender, or in the food processor fitted with steel knife, or mash finely and press through a fine sieve or FOOD MILL.\*\* Pour into a large, clean saucepan or kettle.

Using a wire whisk, stir in grated cheese and milk. Return to *LOW* heat and allow to heat through. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary. At the same time, put the skillet with the sautéed sausage slices on *LOW* heat to heat through.

Divide between two heated soup plates. Garnish each serving with sautéed soy sausage slices.

Yields 2 main course servings

Notes: \*If you do not have lovage growing in your herb garden or in the middle of the winter, you can substitute celery leaves.

\*\*The base for this soup may be prepared ahead to this point and refrigerated for a day or two or frozen for future use. Defrost in the refrigerator, season, and add milk.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.



1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 13.0 g.; FAT = 9.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 38.2 g.;  
CALORIES = 289; CALORIES FROM FAT = 30%

## SPANISH FRIED POTATOES

### *Batatas Fritas*

TPT - 48 minutes

30 minutes = potato soaking period

*French fried potatoes, thanks to the fast food industry, are the only fried potatoes we seem to know today. When you visit Spain, you will find that the fast food fries are certainly not the only fries. Every tapas spread includes fried potatoes, simple “batatas fritas” like these or “batatas bravas,” which are spicy, hot, and wildly popular with the drinking crowd and with the taverna owners since they encourage more drinking and more profit. Some cooks coat the potatoes for crispness; some cooks parboil potatoes before frying. I have found that shallow deep-frying dry, ice cold potatoes in hot oil gives the traditional texture.*

**4 medium, all-purpose potatoes (not Idaho)**

—peeled and chopped into 3/4-inch pieces

**2 quarts cold water**

**1 1/2 cups high-heat safflower or sunflower oil\***

**Salt, to taste**

In a mixing bowl, soak potatoes pieces in *cold* water for at least 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a deep, 9-inch skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat.

Drain potatoes and dry them by spreading them on a cotton tea towel and patting them dry with a second towel. Carefully test heat of oil by dropping one piece of potato into the skillet. If it immediately begins to sizzle, carefully add the rest of the potato pieces into the oil. Allow to fry until lightly browned. Turn to brown evenly using a long-handled wooden fork. Transfer the fried potatoes to paper toweling to drain.

*Sprinkle with salt while hot.* Transfer fried potatoes to a serving bowl.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 4 servings

Notes: \*Instead of throwing out the oil after you have used it to deep-fry or having it go rancid in your cupboard before you use it again, allow it to cool, remove any bits of food that might still be in the oil by pouring it through a fine sieve lined with culinary cheesecloth several times, pour the filtered oil into a freezer container or canning jar with a tightly-fitting lid, and freeze until you need it again. I have used frozen oil repeatedly for deep-frying as much as six months later.



This recipe can not be doubled. Instead, fry potatoes in several batches, if necessary.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.0 g.; FAT = 4.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 132; CALORIES FROM FAT = 29%

## SWEDISH OVEN – ROASTED HASSELBACK POTATOES

### *Hasselbackpotatis*

TPT - 1 hour and 21 minutes

*This Swedish method of roasting potatoes produces the prettiest presentation of any potato roasting method. We have found that a pair of chopsticks, albeit probably not traditional, are the most effective way to control the cut. Have you ever thought of baked potatoes for breakfast? Hasselback potatoes really make a dramatic presentation.*

**2 medium all-purpose potatoes or 2 small baking potatoes, of uniform size**

**1 tablespoon butter—melted**

**2 tablespoons dry breadcrumbs\***

**1 1/2 teaspoons grated *pecorino Romano* cheese**  
**Rosemary powder**

**Butter**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Prepare a roasting pan by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Peel potatoes and drop them into a bowl of *cold* water to prevent them from discoloring. Place each potato, in turn, into the bowl of deep wooden spoon or between two chopsticks and slice crosswise at 1/8-inch intervals, leaving about 1/2 inch at either end. (*The cuts will not pass completely through the potatoes due to the edges of the spoon or the obstacle of the chopsticks.*) Return the sliced potatoes *carefully* to the cold water.

When ready to roast potatoes, drain well and pat dry with paper toweling. Place potatoes fan-side-up in prepared baking pan. Using a pastry brush, baste the potato with *melted* butter—using about 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls.



Bake in the center of the preheated 400-degree F. oven for 45 minutes. *Reduce oven temperature to 200 degrees F.*

Remove pan from oven. Sprinkle breadcrumbs over each potato and baste with the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls *melted* butter. Return to the oven for an additional 15 minutes, or until potatoes are *golden brown* and tender.

Remove pan from oven. Place each on a heated, heat-tolerant dinner plate. Sprinkle grated cheese and a light sprinkling of rosemary powder over each potato. *Place in a 200-degree F. oven until you are ready to serve.*

*Serve with butter.*

Yields 2 servings

Notes: \*If desired, 1 teaspoonful *Dijon* mustard can be worked into the breadcrumbs.

This recipe may be doubled or tripled, when necessary.

1/2 SERVING (exclusive of extra butter) –  
PROTEIN = 5.3 g.; FAT = 8.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 47.6 g.;  
CALORIES = 272; CALORIES FROM FAT = 27%

*I know, I could have included potato salads from all over the world  
but there just wasn't room this month.  
Maybe I can narrow my scope in the future  
and put together five or six potato salads you haven't tried . . .  
but until I do  
I'll share some interesting winter salad combinations  
you may not have considered.  
Drop by next month; bring a salad fork,*

*Judy*

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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