

Classic Potato Salad

By Millie Peartree

Total Time 35 minutes, plus chilling

Rating ★★★★★ (1,704)



Christopher Testani for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Monica Pierini.

The recipe for this Southern classic came from the chef Millie Peartree's mother, Millie Bell. The sweet relish melds with the creamy potatoes for a deep, balanced flavor. Onion powder adds savory notes without the texture of diced onion, which could overpower the dish. Make sure that your eggs are rinsed thoroughly, so no pieces of shell remain, and that your potatoes are uniformly cut in roughly 1-inch cubes so they all finish cooking at the same time. (Millie Bell used her thumb as a measure.) And, most important of all, don't overcook the potatoes — they take only 15 to 20 minutes to boil. You want potato salad, not mashed potatoes. You can prepare potato salad ahead of time and refrigerate it for up to 4 days.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 8 servings (2½ quarts)

3 pounds russet, Yukon Gold or Idaho potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes

Kosher salt and black pepper

1 cup mayonnaise

¼ cup sweet relish

1 tablespoon yellow mustard

1 teaspoon granulated onion or onion powder

6 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and diced small

2 celery stalks (optional)

Sweet paprika, for garnish

PREPARATION

Step 1

Set the potatoes in a large pot; add 1 tablespoon salt and cover with cold water by 1 inch. Set over high heat and cook just until fork-tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. (You still want the potatoes to still have some shape to avoid turning the dish into mashed potatoes.) Drain potatoes, and set them aside to cool. **Note: 15 to 20 minutes is TOO LONG.**

Step 2

As potatoes cool, make the dressing: To a large bowl, add mayonnaise, relish, mustard and granulated onion; whisk to combine.

Step 3

Add the potatoes to the dressing, along with the diced hard-boiled eggs, and celery, if using; stir gently to combine. Taste and season with salt and black pepper as needed.

Step 4

Chill for at least 2 hours, and up to overnight. Serve cold. Finish with a sprinkle of paprika. Potato salad will keep for 4 days in an airtight container.

NOTES: I've made this many times. It is a VERY standard potato salad recipe, no fancy variations or anything, and hence is extremely good. Some comments:

1) COOKING TIME FOR THE POTATOES IS THE KEY, and it is challenging to get perfect. Too long and it's like eating mashed potato salad. Too short is worse, then the potatoes are crunchy. This works for me:

- I use peeled Yukon Gold potatoes cut in roughly 1 inch pieces.*
- The recipe says cook the potatoes for 15 to 20 minutes. WAY TOO LONG. I start testing them at 10 minutes, typically done at 11 to 11-1/2 minutes. Russet or Idaho potatoes will cook even quicker so BE CAREFUL.*
- When done drain immediately. Recipe says to let cool but I add them to the dressing while still quite warm; it helps stop further cooking, and they absorb dressing better.*
- Again a final warning: TEST THE POTATOES REGULARLY when cooking them. They need to be just right.*

2) It's easier to dice the eggs if they're very cold, so make them ahead of time.

3) I personally like the "optional" celery.

4) And, I don't bother with the decorative paprika sprinkle.