

EXPLORER

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FOOD: Try cottage pie

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Published:
September-17-2008

This has been a favorite of my daughter's since she was a little girl. It is tasty and can be made ahead of time, placed in the fridge and finished in the oven within a day or two of preparation.

Originally shepherd's pie was made from leftover lamb roast. I personally prefer lean ground beef, which has a milder flavor and is not as fatty as ground lamb. If you make this pie with ground beef, it is known as cottage pie.

To prepare the mashed potatoes, I would suggest using either Yukon Gold or Russet potatoes. These have a high starch content resulting in fluffier potatoes.

Always start your peeled potatoes off in cold water with salt added to it.

Use just enough water to cover the potatoes. Bring the water to a boil. Boil the potatoes until fork tender. The number of potatoes determines the cooking time. Drain the potatoes immediately when done. Do not rinse, put them back in the pot and return the pot to your stove. This will make any excess water dry out of the potatoes and result in more flavor.

The way you mash your potatoes affects the texture. Use either a potato masher or a ricer. I personally use a ricer as this produces a really smooth texture. You can use an electric mixer for really fluffy potatoes. Add a little milk, cream or butter depending on your preference before mashing.

Enjoy!

SHEPHERD'S (OR COTTAGE) PIE

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon canola or olive oil
- 1 1/2 pounds ground meat (lamb or beef)
- 1 large onion finely chopped
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 1 stick celery chopped
- 1 teaspoon tomato puree
- 1 teaspoon light soy or Worcestershire sauce
- 3 1/2 fluid ounces low sodium beef broth or water
- 1 bay leaf

1 can vegetarian baked beans (optional)

1 1/2 pounds potatoes, boiled and mashed with 4 tablespoons milk and a little butter for topping

Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation: Preheat oven to 400.

Heat a wide-base pan with the oil. Fry the ground meat at high. It may appear a little dry. Not to worry, as the meat cooks it will produce plenty of liquid. When cooked and browned, drain the meat over a large bowl using a colander to catch all the juices. Keep meat to one side. Return juices to pan and turn up the heat. Add the onions, carrots and celery.

After about 10 minutes, these will have softened. Return meat to the pan with the tomato puree and Worcestershire or soy sauce.

Add stock or water with the bay leaf and simmer for about 10 more minutes.

Add the baked beans if using them. Season to taste. Transfer to baking dish or casserole. Top pie with the mashed potatoes and dot with a little extra butter, if liked.

Bake for 20-25 minutes or until bubbly and golden.

Serve immediately with a helping of cooked peas.

To share a favorite recipe with Mary Elizabeth Evans, go to www.teascompany.net.

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