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*Recipes excerpted from **Happy Holidays from the Diva of Do-Ahead** by Diane Phillips. Published by Harvard Common Press, Boston, MA. Copyright 2006. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.*

Garlic-Herb Make-Ahead Mashed Potatoes

The technique in this recipe is similar to that of the Thanksgiving mashed potatoes (p. 255), but here the additions are garlic and Boursin cheese. Like the others, these fluffy potatoes will rise like a soufflé, and the best part is that they can be ready several days before your big dinner.

8 medium-size russet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
4 cloves garlic
6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, softened
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 cup sour cream
Two 3.5-ounce packages Boursin or other garlic-herb cream cheese
1/3 cup chopped fresh chives (optional)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. Boil the potatoes and garlic in salted water to cover until tender. Drain.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Rub a 13 x 9-inch baking dish with 2 tablespoons of the butter. Sprinkle the Parmesan into the dish and tip the dish so the cheese is evenly distributed and adheres to the butter.
3. Put the potatoes and garlic into a large bowl, add the sour cream, Boursin, 2 tablespoons of the remaining butter, and the chives, if using. Using an electric mixer, beat the potatoes until smooth. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Transfer to the prepared dish and dot with the remaining 2 tablespoons butter.

Diva Do-Ahead: At this point, you can cover and refrigerate for 2 to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month. Bring to room temperature before continuing.

Bake the potatoes until golden, about 25 minutes. Serve hot.

Slow Cooker Savvy: These potatoes can be heated in a 4-quart slow cooker if you have a removable ceramic insert. Butter the insert and dust it with the cheese as directed in Step 2. Follow the recipe through Step 3 and fill the insert with the mashed potatoes. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 6 hours, until heated through. Dust the top with more Parmesan and butter before serving.