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Smoked Spud Skins

Serves 4 to 6 as an appetizer

As potatoes themselves do, the skins step lively after a barbecue bath.

8 baking potatoes, scrubbed

Butter or olive oil

1 to 2 tablespoons **Wild Willy's Number One-derful Rub** (see below),
or other savory seasoning blend

3/4 cup grated Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese (about 3 ounces)

Sliced scallions, for garnish

Sauce Olé (see below)

1. Bake or boil the potatoes until tender. Then cut in halves or quarters and scoop out to leave a shell 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch thick. (Reserve the scooped-out portions for mashed potatoes or another use.)

2. Prepare the smoker for barbecuing, bringing the temperature to 200°F to 220°F.

3. Rub the potato skins with a thin coat of butter or oil. Sprinkle the skins, inside and out, with the rub or other dry spice mixture.

4. Transfer the skins to the smoker and cook until they are browned and crispy, 55 to 65 minutes. Sprinkle the cheese over the skins and cook for an additional couple of minutes, until the cheese melts. Top with the scallions. Serve piping hot with Sauce Olé.

Wild Willy's Number One-derful Rub

Makes about 2 cups [easy to halve the recipe]

This is our main all-purpose rub, good on ribs, brisket, chicken, and more.

3/4 cup paprika or Spanish smoked paprika

1/4 cup freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup kosher salt or coarse sea salt

1/4 cup sugar

2 tablespoons chili powder

2 tablespoons garlic powder

2 tablespoons onion powder

2 teaspoons cayenne

Mix the spices thoroughly in a bowl. Store covered in a cool, dark pantry.

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Sauce Olé

Makes about 2-1/4 cups

A chunky, salsa-style sauce that enhances barbecued pork, smoked turkey, or our Nachos Blancos.

3/4 cup canned crushed tomatoes
2 small Roma or other plum tomatoes, chopped
1/2 medium red onion, chopped
1/2 cup chopped roasted green chiles, preferably New Mexican, Anaheim, or poblano, fresh or frozen
1/2 cup water
2 to 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon table salt

1. Combine the ingredients (starting with just 2 tablespoons of the lime juice) in a saucepan and bring the mixture to a simmer over medium heat. Cook for approximately 10 minutes, enough to slightly thicken the sauce. The vegetables should soften a little yet still stay crisp-tender. Taste and add additional lime juice if desired. Refrigerate the sauce for at least 1 hour to allow the flavor to develop.

2. Serve the sauce chilled. It keeps, refrigerated for several days.

VARIATION: GREEN SAUCE OLÉ: Substitute an equal amount of pureed fresh or canned tomatillos for the canned crushed tomatoes and reduce the amount of lime juice to 1-1/2 to 3 teaspoons.