

Potatoes Anna

Serves 6-8

Among the autumn harvest abundance are many wonderful potato varieties. And, considering the number of ways we enjoy them, the humble potato must be at the top of the “favorite root vegetable” list. There’s baked, boiled, mashed, fried, shredded, scalloped, and the list goes on! This dish is elegant, yet incredibly simple! While it makes a stunning table presentation, it’s the taste of these potatoes that will be remembered. We add a couple of twists to the classic Potatoes Anna with the addition of garlic and thyme shifting the flavor to a more autumn profile, one that holds its own when part of a hearty autumn menu.

Ingredients:

6-8 large potatoes
1/2 cup butter
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

1. Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Add the crushed garlic and let it steep in the hot butter infusing its incredible flavor for 3-5 minutes. Do not let the butter brown. Strain the melted butter through a fine mesh strainer leaving any garlic solids behind.
2. Peel the potatoes. Wash and pat dry. Slice to 1/16-inch thickness; a mandoline or handheld slicer is key to thin, even slicing. If desired, cut perfect, circular “potato coins” from each slice with a round biscuit cutter or cookie cutter. (Use the leftover potato trimmings to make mashed potatoes to be enjoyed another day.)
3. Butter the bottom and sides of a 9- to 10-inch round baking dish, (a tart pan, quiche dish, or a deep-dish pie plate).
4. Beginning at the center, layer the potato slices in an overlapping fashion. Brush the layer with melted butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Repeat with another layer of potatoes, brush with butter, and, again, sprinkle with salt and butter. Continue in a similar fashion with additional layers. Fill the dish with layers to within 1/2-inch of the top. Sprinkle the fresh thyme leaves on top.
5. Bake in a 400°F oven for 40-50 minutes, or until a sharp knife tip pierces through the layers easily. Check the progress frequently beginning at the 30-minute mark. The edges of potato slices should begin to turn a nice golden color. If the top is nicely browned but the inner layers not quite tender, loosely tent a piece of foil over the top.
6. Garnish with additional sprigs of fresh thyme and serve wedges of these delicious potatoes.



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Variations:

Traditional Potatoes Anna – Even more simple, omit the garlic and thyme, and let the potatoes and butter do work their magic together. Traditional Potatoes Anna, or Pommes Anna, is an inverted dish. Using a 10- or 12-inch cast iron skillet or enameled cast iron braiser, build the buttery layers in a similar fashion. Heat the skillet over a medium burner for 5 minutes to accelerate the cooking of the bottom and sides; this will allow a nice golden color to develop, important in the final, inverted presentation. Cover loosely with a piece of aluminum foil. Continue the cooking by baking in a 400°F oven for 30-35 minutes or until the layers are easily pierced with the tip of a sharp knife. When done, place the serving platter on top of the skillet, invert, and serve.

Potatoes Rosemary – Substitute finely chopped rosemary for the thyme to present a different flavor personality.

Potatoes Boursin – Build the potato layers as described, however, dot two of the inner layers with bits of your favorite herbed boursin or other soft cheese, using only about 2-3 ounces of cheese. The cheese melts and forms a sauce of sorts. A nice, delicate addition!