

Potatoes au Gratin - Gratin Dauphinois

Preparation: 15 minutes

Cooking: 60-75 minutes

Servings: 4

Equipment: 4-quart saucepan, au gratin pan, sharp knife or food processor, wooden spoon

INGREDIENTS:

2 bay leaf

2 cup milk

8 tbsp unsalted butter, divided use

Salt to taste

Freshly ground white pepper to taste

Grated fresh nutmeg to taste

2 cup heavy cream

2 pound potatoes, peeled and sliced very thin

2 clove garlic, peeled and minced

1 1/3 cup grated Gruyère cheese

When wheat crops failed in eighteenth-century France, an attempt was made to make the humble potato replace bread as a staple of the French peasants' diet. In time, the potato became the most popular vegetable in France. Potatoes au Gratin is uniquely French and different from American recipes. This recipe originated in the French Alps, where potatoes were cooked in earthenware pots on the hearth. The cheese melted and became golden brown; the dish was served piping hot, rich in both aroma and taste.

Boil milk with bay leaf in saucepan, taking care not to let it boil over. Preheat oven to 325°.

Add 3 tablespoons butter, salt, pepper, grated nutmeg, cream, garlic and potatoes to the pan with the hot milk.

But before adding the potatoes, taste the milk mixture to be sure there is enough salt.

Simmer, stirring from time to time with a wooden spoon to separate potatoes. Cook 20 minutes or until just tender. Remove from heat and set aside.

Grease an au gratin dish with remaining 1 tablespoon of butter. Rub dish with a cut piece of garlic. Pour in potato mixture and sprinkle with grated Gruyere cheese.

Bake potatoes for 40-45 minutes. If surface of potato mixture is not browned sufficiently, place under broiler for about 3 minutes.

Remove and let cool for 5 minutes before serving.
