The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Dacha Delight: Garlicky Baby Hasselback Potatoes

Time on your hands? Hasselback some potatoes.

By Jennifer Eremeeva

July 31, 2021

Jennifer Eremeeva / MT

Timing is one of the bigger challenges of entertaining during the summer months in the country. If visitors are coming from the city, their ETA is usually deeply uncertain, dependent as it is on the dreaded "propki" or traffic jams, which snarl every major arterial road leading out of the city. I know lots of Muscovites who get up at three in the morning on a Saturday just to have a halfway decent run of it. And while it is no fun to sit in traffic for four hours moving only inches per minute, it is no less nerve-wracking to be at the other end of the line, waiting at the dacha like a character in a Chekhov play, trying to have everything ready, but stressing about timing. Many a woodpile has been decimated trying to keep the mangal or grill in readiness for guests stuck in an epic traffic jam.

At moments like these, a time-consuming, fiddly project comes into its own. My friend Sveta

assembles a 3,000-piece jigsaw puzzle each summer at her dacha, then decorates the walls with the results. These are mind-bending complex — a high resolution reproduction of something like the Sistine Chapel ceiling or Repin's Barge Haulers on the Volga with tiny pieces. My solutions are, of course, culinary, though no less soothing or absorbing. I like to lose myself in a hypnotic repetitive task of prepping something like mini hasselback potatoes, which are always a welcome appetizer or side dish, disappearing mere seconds after I put them out.

To "hasselback" something is to make thin slices into whatever you cook that go almost to the bottom but not quite all the way, then roast it. This creates exponentially more surface area, and often a delightful fan-like effect. Anything that is hasselbacked benefits from a shorter cooking time, and the thin layers can be enhanced with almost any flavor you care to introduce; you can stuff something between the layers, as we do in Hussar-Style Beef, or, with hasselbacked potatoes, or coat the thin layers with an infused butter and olive oil mixture spiked with garlic as I do with my potatoes.

Hasselbacking gets its name from the storied Hasselbacken Restaurant and Hotel in Stockholm, which dates back to the eighteenth century and is stillpopular today. In 1953, Leif Elisson, one of the restaurant's trainee chefs, created the famous hasselback potato. Though Elisson's *hasselbackspotatis* enjoyed popularity at home, the trend would have to wait for social media to make it a global sensation. In 2011, everyone began hasselbacking everything from hard-boiled eggs to melons. Enthusiasm for the method, which produces marvelously clickable images and delicious dishes, seems unlikely to wane.

I've had a lot fun hasselbacking all kinds of things, but golden new potatoes remain my favorite. The method produces just the right texture: crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. A little garlic makes things interesting, but you could also add more robust flavors such as barbecue or hot sauce.

There is a wealth of advice on how to achieve the best hasselbacked cuts, and the most popular is to place the potato between two chopsticks, then use a small but very sharp knife to cut down until the blade touches chopstick. This is the method I have found produces the most consistent results without too much blood being spilled.

I've included my go-to dunking sauce of choice, but I've seen bottled salad dressing, or some spiked mayonnaise work to almost equal effect. So if your friends are stuck in a jam, get some potatoes, and enjoy a soothing session of hasselbacking. You'll find the time flies by, and you'll have something delicious (and Instagramable) for them when they arrive.

Ingredients

- I pound (500 grams) of small golden new potatoes
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 tsp sea salt
- 1 Tbsp red pepper or Aleppo pepper

For the sauce

- 1 cup (240 grams) sour cream
- ½ cup (120 grams) Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp of your favorite spice blend (try Dukkha, Cajun Spice Blend, Furikake, Ras el Hanout, Tzasiki Blend, or simply a blend of fresh garden herbs.)

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 425º (220 Cº) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Make the sauce by whisking together all the ingredients and chilling well while the potatoes cook.
- Hasselback the potatoes by creating between 6-9 thin cuts almost, but not quite down to the bottom of the potato. If you are preparing these ahead of time, keep the hasselbacked potatoes in a bowl of cool water.
- Peel and smash the garlic, then combine it with the butter and olive oil and 1 tsp of salt and melt in the microwave or a small saucepan on top of the stove.
- Place the hasselback potatoes cut side up on the prepared baking sheet. Brush them with the melted butter and olive oil, then sprinkle with the remaining salt and the red pepper. Bake for 25 minutes, then brush them again with the butter mixture and bake for an additional 10 minutes.
- Serve hot alongside the dipping sauce.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/07/31/dacha-delight-garlicky-baby-hasselback-potatoes-a74664