

Italian Potato Salad

Serves 6-8 | 15 minutes prep + 20 minutes cook time

Legendary cookbook author Marcella Hazan wrote that Italians judge a home cook by their potato salad, noting that there's no "mystery about what goes into it: It's just potatoes, salt, olive oil, and vinegar." While an ocean of mayo can cover the mediocre potatoes and celery of the American version, a stripped down Italian potato salad can't hide behind it. As Hazan wrote, it's all about the potatoes.

"The flesh must be waxy smooth and compact, not crumbly; their color when cooked warm and golden, like that of maize or country butter; their flavor fresh, sweet, and nutty, with no hint of mustiness." She's just as adamant about how the spuds are cooked, dressed, and served. The salad must be "lukewarm or no colder than room temperature," Hazan admonishes, "Do not keep overnight, and do not refrigerate."

Yellow potatoes make the best salad. They're moist, slightly waxy, and less prone to the mealy breakdown of Russets. And as much as I love the simplicity of Hazan's salad, I like to bump up the flavor just a bit with a few more ingredients that still fit the Italian model.

2 lbs yellow potatoes, roughly the same size

¼ cup Pantellerian salt-packed capers

1 tablespoon Karam's garlic sauce*

2 teaspoons Pantellerian dried oregano

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

Kosher sea salt to taste

***or 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**

Step 1 Soak the capers in cold water for 10-15 minutes, then drain and rinse off any excess salt. Chop coarsely.

Step 2 Boil the potatoes in their skins until they're easily pierced with a knife. Drain, cool until you can handle them, but peel while they're warm. Cut into bite-sized pieces and toss with the vinegar.

Step 3 Add the olive oil, garlic sauce, oregano, and capers. Toss well, taste, and add salt if needed (the capers are salty so taste before adding more).