

Oh! Gratin, potatoes

Serves 6-8 | 20 minutes prep + about 1 hour active cooking

There is a universal truth about the holidays: at some point, you will open your fridge and discover a handful of mysterious cheese fragments — a half wedge of Gruyère, one sad corner of Brie, something you bought because the cheesemonger said “funky, but in a good way.” This gratin exists to rescue all of them.

It's luxurious without the labor — no fussy layering, no precision choreography. You make a quick cheesy cream situation (the technical term), toss the potatoes with your hands, and let the oven do the rest. The result: crispy edges, tender centers, and dinner party MVP status.

Make it the night before or half an hour before you sprint out the door; it forgives, reheats beautifully, and turns whatever's in your cheese drawer into something that tastes intentional.

Consider this the easiest win of the season, and a very satisfying way to clean out the fridge.

3 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes

3 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons flour

1 cup milk

1 cup heavy cream

1½–2 cups grated cheese — a great place to use bits and bops. Check the odds & ends bin at the cheese shop; grab some Brie and toss chunks of it in at the end — it's really good.

3 cloves garlic, finely minced

2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon pepper

1–2 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped

Just a few inches of a twig of fresh rosemary, chopped

Pinch of nutmeg (optional)

Step 1 Preheat your oven to 375°F.

Step 2 Slice up the potatoes pretty thin on the mandolin.

Step 3 Make a roux: In a pot on medium-low heat, melt the butter, then add the flour. Stir for a minute or so — it's really easy.

Step 4 Add your milk and cream, whisking as you go. Then stir in your cheese, garlic, salt, pepper, chopped herbs, and a little nutmeg if you've got it. (Do you know the trick where you pull the sprig of thyme through a grater hole to strip the leaves? It actually works great.).

Step 5 Use your hands — the best kitchen tool there is. Toss the potatoes in your creamy, cheesy mixture so they're all coated; if you don't, they'll clump and you'll get dry spots.

Step 1 You can butter the dish if you want, but honestly, we didn't last time and it was fine — there's already plenty of butter and cream in here.

When adding the potatoes to the dish, we tried this two different ways — The “pile of leaves” method, where the potato slices lay flat and overlap and The “stand them up” method, where they're all on their edge. The fancy upright version gives you a little more craggy, golden goodness (and looks cool), but both are delicious.

Step 2 Cover loosely with foil and bake for about 40 minutes.

Step 3 Remove the foil and bake another 20–25 minutes, until it's golden, bubbling, and a knife slides in easily.

Step 4 Let it sit for 10 minutes before serving — it'll set up as it cools.