

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN



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Best Baked Potatoes

SERVES 2

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Open up the potatoes immediately after removal from the oven in step 3 so steam can escape. Top them as desired, or with one of our toppings.

Salt and pepper

- 2 (7- to 9-ounce) russet potatoes, unpeeled, each lightly pricked with fork in 6 places**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Dissolve 2 tablespoons salt in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in large bowl. Place potatoes in bowl and toss so exteriors of potatoes are evenly moistened. Transfer potatoes to wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet and bake until center of largest potato registers 205 degrees, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

2. Remove potatoes from oven and brush tops and sides with oil. Return potatoes to oven and continue to bake for 10 minutes.

3. Remove potatoes from oven and, using paring knife, make 2 slits, forming X, in each potato. Using clean dish towel, hold ends and squeeze slightly to push flesh up and out. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

HERBED GOAT CHEESE TOPPING

Makes $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Our favorite goat cheese is Laura Chenel's Chèvre Fresh Chèvre Log.

- 2 ounces goat cheese, softened**
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley**
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons minced shallot**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon grated lemon zest**

Salt and pepper

Mash goat cheese with fork. Stir in oil, parsley, shallot, and lemon zest. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

SMOKED TROUT TOPPING

Makes $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

We prefer trout for this recipe, but any hot-smoked fish, such as salmon or bluefish, may be substituted.

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces smoked trout, chopped**
- 3 tablespoons crème fraîche**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives**
- 2 teaspoons minced shallot**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon grated lemon zest plus $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon lemon juice**

Salt and pepper

Stir all ingredients together and season with salt and pepper to taste.

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