

Cheesy Potatoes

The amounts are all estimates; I don't measure when making this, except for the milk. You will need a cast iron oven of least 7 quarts volume (or reduce the recipe accordingly)

Ingredients:

1.5 to 2 pounds of smoked, sliced ham. I like the Frick's 1896 smoked boneless, sliced hams (a little expensive but very tasty. Cub has them)

2 pounds of shredded cheddar cheese (sharp cheddar is best)

2 tubs of shredded Belgioso (local) Asiago or Parmesan or Romano cheese (or other similar, quality flavorful cheese)

5-7 pounds of potatoes, washed, skins on (organic recommended)

White sauce:

3.5 cups of milk

4 Tbsp butter

3 Tbsp of flour

~2 tsp garlic powder

~1 Tbsp smoked paprika (or regular)

~2 Tbsp Knorr chicken broth powder (or 2 Knorr cubes)

~1 Tbsp Sri Racha hot sauce (or 1 tsp Tabasco)

Start 4 hours before serving time:

Heat oven to 300°F

Cut up the ham into small pieces (about 3/4 inch square or a little smaller if you have sliced ham. Otherwise 1/2-inch cubes) Set aside.

Have the cheese all ready to go. Set aside.

Make up 3 to 3-1/2 cups of white sauce, but with added: Garlic powder, smoked paprika (or regular), Knorr chicken broth powder, and Sri Racha hot sauce (or Tabasco):

3.5 cups milk, heat in the microwave for 8 minutes in a pyrex measuring cup (qt. size).

Heat butter, spices, and flour in the sauce pan on low heat; make a smooth paste of it.

When the milk is heated, pour it into the paste slowly while whisking the hot paste mixture in the saucepan. When smooth, heat a little longer on medium high heat, but do not fully thicken it*.

Set aside. (* Cream (not heavy whipping cream) consistency is what you are going for.)

Now you have the sauce, cheese, and ham ready to go.

Grease the inside of the cast iron oven (I use olive oil).

Using a food processor, slice the potatoes into thin slices. Slice about 4-5 potatoes at a time. Arrange the potato slices in a layer on the bottom of the pan. Distribute 1/3 of the ham chunks on top. Distribute 1/3 of the cheddar cheese and 1/3 of the Asiago cheese on top. On top of this first layer, add about 1/3 of the white sauce.

Slice 4-5 more potatoes, repeat the above steps until you've done three layers**, then add a final thin layer of potatoes and cheese on top. Pour remaining white sauce over the top.

Put into the oven immediately. Bake for 3 hours (or a bit more is OK) at 300°F.

(** Building up from the bottom:

potatoes, ham, cheese, sauce,

potatoes, ham, cheese,

potatoes, ham, cheese,

thin layer potatoes, little bit of cheese, rest of the sauce)