TWICE BAKED POTATOES

YIELD: 8 Servings

INGREDIENTS:

4 large russet potatoes Extra virgin olive oil 1/2 cup sour cream 1/2 cup whole milk 2 Tbsp. butter, *softened* 1 tablespoon cream

STUFFING OPTION 1: CHEDDAR AND BACON: 1 cup grated cheddar cheese 4 strips bacon 1/4 cup chopped green onion

STUFFING OPTION 2: BLUE CHEESE AND CHIVES: 1 cup crumbled blue cheese 1/4 cup chopped fresh chives 1/2 tsp. salt

PREPARATION:

Bake the Potatoes. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Scrub the potatoes clean under running water. Poke each potato in several places with the tines of a fork so that when the potatoes are cooking they don't explode. Rub the potatoes all over with a little olive oil. Place directly on the middle or top rack of the oven. Cook for 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are cooked through. They should give a little when pressed. When finished, remove from oven and cool.

Cook the bacon if using: If you are including bacon as one of your mix-ins, while the potatoes are cooking, cook the bacon strips in a frying pan on medium low heat for 10 to 15 minutes, or until crisp. Drain on paper towels. Let cool. Crumble.

Make potato "boats": Allow the potatoes to cool to touch. Slice in half lengthwise. Use a spoon to scoop out the insides, forming a potato "canoe", leaving about 1/4 inch of potato on the skin.

Make potato filling: Mash potato insides with sour cream, milk, butter. Place the scooped out potato insides, sour cream, milk, cream, and butter into a large bowl. Mash with a potato masher. If you want a creamy texture, beat with an electric beater until desired consistency. Be careful not to over-beat the potatoes-the consistency can get glue-y if you do.

Stuff potato shells with filling: Mix in the extras with the potato filling. Reserve some of the extras to sprinkle on the tops of the potatoes. Spoon fillings into the potato shells. Sprinkle with extra toppings.

Bake twice stuffed potatoes: Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F. Place potatoes on a roasting pan or baking sheet and bake 15 to 20 minutes until heated through.

Want just great mashed potatoes without twice baking in the shells? When scooping out the potato halves, scoop out all potato filling without leaving the 1/4 inch inside the potato skins. Mix fillings in a large bowl according to the recipe. If you'd like mashed potatoes to be a little smoother, add milk and stir in a tablespoon at a time to achieve desired consistency.

Recipe adapted from southerndiscourse.com