



How to get perfectly crispy hash browns

BY JAMES P. DEWAN
CHICAGO TRIBUNE (TNS)

One thing I've said exactly 6 gazillion and 11 times is, there are more bad examples of food out there than there are good examples. Today's topic, hash browns, is no exception. Too often, what should be a crispy, creamy, perfectly seasoned, standalone dish is reduced to little more than a bland and mushy ketchup delivery system. Let's see what we can do to fix that.

Why you need to learn this

Do you eat breakfast? Well, then, say no more.

The steps you need to take

Now, before we start, let's get our terms straight so we know exactly what we're talking about. When I think of hash browns, I think of golden brown cakes of pan-fried shredded potatoes. Some people also include preparations where the potatoes are cut into small or medium dice, or even thin slices, but now you're straying into home fries territory. For today, then, we'll grab our graters and go with shredded.

Also, remember that hash browns are pretty much just potatoes. If you start adding binders, like egg or flour, well, now we're talking potato pancakes or latkes. Those are terrific, too, mind you, but they're not hash browns.

Let's take a quick look at the ingredients:

Of course, there's the potatoes. What kind of potatoes depends on whom you ask. Personally, I prefer Russets, the best-known variety of which are called Idaho potatoes. James Beard, the legendary food writer, preferred waxy or new potatoes which have less starch. Clearly, they'll both work with slightly different results. You can decide for yourself.

Regardless of the type of potato, there seem to be two general schools of thought on Planet Hash Brown. One is to start with raw potatoes, the other is to start with previously cooked potatoes, typically boiled or baked. I'm in the raw camp, though I've had some great examples from the cooked camp. If you start with cooked potatoes, you can pretty much cut the cooking time in half. For my money, though, I think you get a somewhat more crispy product by starting with raw.

Next, there's the fat. Remember that fat serves a number of functions, including heat transference, non-stickitude and, perhaps most important, flavor. For the first two functions, any fat or oil will work. For the last function, though, I would recommend lard, bacon fat or clarified butter. (You can use whole butter, but, because it has milk solids, you run a great risk of it burning.)

The last necessary ingredient is salt. Potatoes without salt are like chimps without bananas — just a little bit sad.

See *Crispy*, Page C2



Pies at The Berry Manor Inn in Rockland prepared by inn co-owner Cheryl Michaelsen and assistant innkeeper Lori Hayes. The business is one of the stops on the Pies on Parade in Rockland, which will be held Jan. 31.

Pies on Parade

Rockland event to feature 38 varieties of pastry

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

Shepherd's pie, whoopie pie, seafood chowder pie, blueberry pie and a good many others. By the time this weekend's Pies on Parade Tour ends, pies will be a four-letter word in Rockland.

How much pie can one person stomach in three hours? This year 38 is the number to beat.

That is how many varieties innkeepers and business owners are rolling, stuffing and baking this week in anticipation of the 12th annual Pies on Parade Tour taking over downtown Rockland Sunday. Why do people get pie-eyed for this self-guided tasting? "It's pies. Pies always make people happy," said Cheryl Michaelsen, owner of the Berry Manor Inn, where pie is the signature. Michaelsen, an organizer of this moveable feast, became something of a pie sensation when her mother and mother-in-law turned out the tastiest pies at the inn. The "Pie Moms" rose to stardom, appearing on the Food Network and are now media darlings.

What started out as a way to drum up tourism in the winter is now putting food on plates across the midcoast. The Limerock Inn, Lighthouse Museum, Cafe Miranda, In Good Company, even pet boutique The Loyal Biscuit Co. have joined the parade to keep this fundraiser rolling. All proceeds from each \$30 ticket help fight food insecurity in Maine.

"One hundred percent of everything goes to Area Interfaith Outreach. The Historic Inns of Rockland donate marketing, products, time, labor and staff," said Michaelsen, who is proud that parade funds go toward food and fuel assistance. So far the event has generated \$109,000 for



The Berry Manor Inn co-owner Cheryl Michaelsen (top, right) and assistant innkeeper Lori Hayes prepare pies at the Rockland inn Friday afternoon. They bake three to six pies for their guests every day. Cheryl Michaelsen (above) puts egg wash on a blueberry pie. The Berry Manor Inn in Rockland is one of the stops on the Pies on Parade in Rockland, which will be held Jan. 31.

the food pantry that serves Knox County's neediest.

"Food insecurity is a big problem in Maine. Rockland is an interesting community because it's the county seat and we have a huge amount of people that need assistance to survive," said Michaelsen.

The sweetness of pies tint the darkness of despair.

See *Pies*, Page C2

A wing recipe made for two

A few months ago my car was in the shop for a few minor repairs. While working on the car, one of the mechanics noticed the football I keep in my trunk.

It's there for those just-in-case moments, were you find yourself in a big open space perfect for tossing the pigskin around. It's also there because I keep forgetting to remove it, but that's OK — it's good to have around, even if we don't use it as much as I'd like.

As we were settling the bill, we got to talking about football, my love of the Oakland Raiders and what that says for team loyalty — they aren't exactly known for their lengthy winning streaks — and the NFL season. That was pretty early in the season, and there was still time to hope this would be the year.

Alas, it wasn't. That season is over, and we're nearing the conclusion of the postseason. And it's a postseason closer that won't include the Raiders — or the team most of you favor: The New England Patriots. As disappointing as I know that can be, I was pleasantly surprised by the tenor of Facebook posts about the game Sunday.

I watched. The Denver Broncos played so well, and they deserved that win. And so many of my friends who are Patriots fans had kind, generous things to say about the game afterward. It's not something we always see after a favorite team's loss — heck, there were some downright cruel remarks about Stephen Gostkowski being circulated on Twitter that evening. But among my friends? It was impressive and even a little bit heartwarming.

When the Super Bowl is played at Levi's Stadium in the San Francisco Bay Area on Feb. 7, there's sure to be lots of conversation across social media, both about the game and the commercials. There's also bound to be much food enjoyed that night.

Especially wings, which are an essential football watching food. At least, they are to me.

But most wing recipes feed a crowd, which is great when you have a crowd to feed. That, however, isn't always the case. That's why I created this small-batch recipe. It makes enough for just a couple of you. (Hint: A pound of wings is about 12 wings.) But it's also easily doubled or tripled for more folks.

The wings have a dry spice rub that really permeates the meat while it cooks in the slow cooker. And the hoisin-based glaze gives it a rich Asian flavor on the outside. Make no mistake, these aren't hot wings. (Looking for a

See *Wings*, Page C2



SARAH WALKER CARON

Start the day right with good oatmeal

Cooked oatmeal, a warm porridge with milk and a bit of sugar and raisins, maybe a dash of cinnamon, is such a good breakfast when the wind is howling outside and it is cold. Of course, I know people who eat porridge every morning of their lives — just as my dad did, spring, summer, fall and winter.



SANDY OLIVER
TASTE BUDS

At our house, oatmeal is in a winter rotation of cooked breakfasts with scrambled eggs, sausage and apples or the occasional waffles or pancakes. Last winter, just about this time, I wrote about nonmushy oatmeal, and sure enough it struck a chord. I heard back from some of you, including a couple of intriguing recipes.

Valerie Sulya in Bucksport has developed a way to cook nongummy instant oatmeal. She reports she has eaten oatmeal every morning for 50 years. Her method employs a microwave and in-

Valerie's Daily Oatmeal

Serves 1-2

- 3 coffee scoops or 6 tablespoons of instant oatmeal
- 1 tablespoon Bran buds
- 1 tablespoon wheat bran flakes
- 6 ounces of water
- 3 tablespoons homemade apple or rhubarb sauce, or 1/2 cup mixed fresh fruit
- 1 tablespoon dry granola
- 2 tablespoons coffee creamer or fruit puree

Put the oatmeal, dry cereals and water into a microwaveable bowl and cook for one minute. Stir and cook for an additional 25 to 30 seconds. Add fruit and microwave an additional 30 seconds. Let cool and add granola, creamer or fruit puree.

cludes a lot of stuff — I mean, it's loaded. Here is Valerie's recipe. "This is my daily oatmeal cereal mixture that I eat for breakfast. Every day!"

A Baked Oatmeal recipe came recommended by Ann (whose last name and town, alas, I lost in the detritus on my desk — my apologies). She found it in a community cookbook, the Maine State Grange Cookbook. The recipe was submitted by Kathy Gray of the Nobleboro No. 369. It produc-

es firm oatmeal. If you use nuts and a little bit of cinnamon, it's a little like eating a warm, crumbled up oatmeal cookie for breakfast. I ate mine with a little more milk. Lovely.

Ann noted the recipe calls for 1 cup of brown sugar: "Too much," she wrote, and I agree. She also added raisins and walnuts, an excellent idea. If you use instant oatmeal for this, the 1 cup of milk might suffice. But because I am using rolled oats, I



SANDY OLIVER | BDN

Baked oatmeal is like eating warm oatmeal cookies and milk for breakfast.

needed to add more liquid, so I used additional water, reflected in the recipe below; otherwise, it is too crumbly and the oats are a little bit underdone.

Ann also advised merely warming the leftovers in the microwave. Because the recipe makes a generous amount, you end up with two days worth of breakfast. I halved it and still had leftovers because there are only two of us.

Send queries or answers to Sandy Oliver, 1061 Main Road, Islesboro 04848. Email sandyliver47@gmail.com. For recipes, tell us where they came from, list ingredients, specify number of servings and do not abbreviate measurements. Include name, address and daytime phone number. And make sure to check out Sandy's blog at tastebuds.bangordailynews.com.