



## *Loaded Baked Potato Salad*



### **Ingredients:**

- 2 pounds russet potatoes , about 6 medium-size
- 1 ½ cup sour cream
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- 8 slices bacon , cooked and chopped
- 3 green onions , chopped
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### **Method:**

1. Preheat the oven to 400F.
2. Wash potatoes and prick them with a fork or knife.
3. Bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour or until they are fork tender. Remove from the oven and cool completely.
4. At this point you can peel all of them, or peel half of them and leave the skin on the other half to get a real baked potato feel. Cut the potatoes into small, pieces.
5. Combine the sour cream and mayonnaise in a bowl and stir well.
6. Add the potatoes to a large serving bowl. Season well with salt and pepper. Add the sauce (just enough to coat them well--you may not use it all) and gently stir to coat.
7. Add most of the bacon, onion, and cheese, reserving some for topping at the end, and gently stir to combine.

### *The 7 Biggest Mistakes You Make When Baking Potatoes*

1. You do not dry the potato well: You should certainly rinse the potatoes to remove any dirt and debris. You can even give them a quick scrub with a vegetable brush. However, you need to dry them well after the bath. Excess moisture on the skin can seep into the potato during baking and cause soggy skins. Do be sure to prick a few holes into the skin, too. While the potato is unlikely to explode in the oven, no one needs to take risks with supper.



2. You wrap the potato in foil: Many cooks believe it to be the key to the perfect baked potato. However, turns out you are ruining the skin if you do this. The ideal baked potato skin relies on a certain amount of dehydration and rehydration. If you bake in foil, all the moisture from the potato just circles back into the potato skin, which can leave you with poorly baked skin. So once you have washed and dried the potatoes, leave them be and no wrapping.

3. You do not use a wire rack under the potatoes: Potatoes need to cook all the way through, and the best way for that to happen is to make sure the hot air can get to the potato from all sides. If a potato bakes with one side touching a sheet pan, you will get a hard spot and possibly uneven cooking. Place a thin wire rack inside a rimmed baking sheet. Line up your potatoes, side by side, and place the pan into the oven, making sure there is a room between each potato before closing the oven door.

4. The oven is too hot: Low and slow—that is the mantra of the [Perfect Baked Potato](#). If you have the time to spare, cook the potatoes at 300°F for 90 minutes. If you need to speed that up, bump it to 450°F for 45 minutes. (Note: Your baking time will vary depending on the size of your potato and how hot your oven runs.) However, do not go hotter than that. There is no victory in cooking potatoes at a temperature greater than 450°F. They might be done a bit faster, but the high heat temperature will leave you with overly browned skins that might even char in spots. In addition, since the whole point of a perfectly baked potato is to have skins as delicious as the fluffy interior, there is no charring allowed.

5. You do not take the potatoes' temperature: You know when meat is perfectly cooked by measuring the internal temperature; the same is true for baked potatoes. Use a probe thermometer to measure the temperature of your potatoes. You are aiming for a temperature in the sweet spot between 205°F and 212°F. Below that, the texture may still be too dense, and above that, it may become a gummy mess.

6. You baste first, not last: Skip rubbing your potatoes in oil and salt until the end of the cooking time. That is when they will deliver the most texture and flavor benefit for the potatoes. If you oil them up early, the skins may not turn crispy. The salt, too, can run off the potatoes in the heat. Instead, do a quick oil baste after the potatoes reach 205°F: Remove the pan from the oven. Brush with olive oil (or bacon grease if you have it) and a hefty sprinkle of kosher salt. Return the pan to the oven for 10 minutes — the temperatures of the potatoes will not climb more than 2 or 3 degrees in that time. The oil will crisp up the skins that were dehydrated during the long bake, and the salt will add delectable flavor.

7. You let the potatoes cool before cutting: Unlike meat, potatoes do not get better by resting. They need to be sliced open immediately. If you do not, they will retain water from the still steaming center and turn dense and gummy. Quickly jab a serrated knife through each potato as soon as the pan has cleared the oven. Give them a gentle squeeze (with a hot-temp glove or towel) to create a vent. Then you can gather all your fixings and call the family to the table. The potatoes will have cooled just enough by the time everyone gathers around to enjoy dinner — and marvel at your perfectly baked potatoes.