

Smashed Potatoes | Make on Repeat (Plus the Myths Holding You Back)

Ask ten home cooks why their Smashed Potatoes didn't turn out crispy, and you'll get ten different half-right answers. Not enough oil. Wrong oven rack. Bad potato variety. The truth is that this dish has a reputation for being finicky, when really it's one of the most forgiving recipes in the potato family as long as you understand what's actually happening at each step.

This post takes a slightly different approach than a typical recipe card. Instead of just listing steps, we're going to walk through the biggest myths and misconceptions about Smashed Potatoes, correct them one by one, and then give you a complete, foolproof method you can use tonight. By the end, you'll know exactly why [Crispy Smashed Potatoes](#) work the way they do not just how to make them.

Myth #1: "Any Potato Will Work"

This is probably the single biggest reason people end up disappointed. Not every potato is built for this technique. Starchy potatoes, like russets, are wonderful for baking whole or for classic mashed potatoes, but they tend to crumble apart the moment you press down on them after boiling.

The truth: Smashed Potatoes need a waxy, low-starch variety that holds its structure. Baby Yukon Golds and baby red potatoes are the gold standard. Their firmer flesh means they'll flatten into an intact disc rather than falling apart into mush, and Yukon Golds in particular give you that deep, Golden Smashed Potatoes color everyone's chasing on social media.

Myth #2: "More Boiling Time Equals Softer, Better Potatoes"

It's tempting to think that boiling longer guarantees a creamier interior, but this is where a lot of batches go wrong. Overboiled potatoes absorb excess water and become fragile, which means they'll disintegrate the second you try to flatten them.

The truth: You're aiming for "just fork-tender," not falling-apart tender. Test with a paring knife around the 15-minute mark, and pull the potatoes the moment they offer no resistance. If you're unsure, slightly underdone is safer than overdone you can always extend the roasting time to fully cook the center.

Myth #3: "You Can Skip the Drying Step"

Many recipes rush straight from draining to smashing, but that extra few minutes of air-drying matters more than most people realize.

The truth: Any leftover moisture on the potato's surface turns into steam the moment it hits a hot pan, and steam is the enemy of crispiness. Letting your drained potatoes sit uncovered for five minutes allows that surface moisture to evaporate, setting you up for a much better crust. Some cooks even pat them dry with a clean towel for extra insurance.

Myth #4: "A Light Drizzle of Oil Is Enough"

This is where home cooks most often underestimate the recipe. A thin, delicate drizzle might look elegant, but it won't produce the deep, crackly crust that makes this dish famous.

The truth: Be generous. Oil is the medium that transfers oven heat directly to the potato's surface, and it needs to seep into every crack created during smashing. If your Smashed Potatoes are coming out pale or soft, doubling your oil is usually the fastest fix.

Myth #5: "Crowding the Pan Just Means Less Cleanup"

It's easy to think that fitting all your potatoes onto one tray saves time, but overcrowding is one of the most common and most avoidable mistakes.

The truth: Potatoes packed too closely together trap steam between them, which softens the surfaces instead of crisping them. Give each potato at least an inch of breathing room, and if you're making a large batch, use two trays rather than squeezing everything onto one.

Myth #6: "You Have to Use the Oven"

While the oven is the most reliable method for larger batches, it's not the only way to achieve that signature crunch.

The truth: An air fryer can produce equally crispy sometimes even crispier results in less time, thanks to its concentrated, circulating heat. If you want to compare methods yourself, take a look at our detailed breakdown of [How to Make Crispy Air Fried Potatoes](#), which uses many of the same core principles in a faster format.

Myth #7: "Fresh Herbs and Dried Herbs Work the Same Way"

Herbs are often treated as an afterthought, tossed on without much consideration for timing or type, but this small detail actually affects both flavor and texture more than most people expect.

The truth: Dried herbs like rosemary and thyme hold up well to the high heat of roasting and can be mixed into the oil before the potatoes go into the oven, since they need time to rehydrate and

release their flavor. Fresh herbs, on the other hand, are more delicate and are best added after roasting, either tossed on immediately or stirred into a finishing butter. Adding fresh herbs too early can cause them to scorch and turn bitter, especially at the high temperatures needed for a good crust.

Myth #8: "Bigger Batches Just Take Longer to Cook"

When doubling or tripling a recipe, it's tempting to assume the only change needed is a longer time in the oven, but that assumption often leads to disappointing results.

The truth: Scaling up successfully is less about time and more about space. Two half-full trays will always outperform one overcrowded tray, even if the overcrowded tray theoretically holds the same total number of potatoes. If you're cooking for a crowd, plan for multiple trays and rotate them between oven racks partway through for the most even results.

Why Presentation Matters More Than You'd Think

It's easy to think of plating as purely cosmetic, but with Smashed Potatoes, how you serve them can actually affect how they taste at the moment. Because the crispy crust begins to soften as soon as steam from the interior starts escaping, serving on a wire rack rather than a flat plate can help maintain crunch for a few extra minutes by allowing air to circulate underneath. This is a simple trick used in professional kitchens that translates easily to a home dinner table, especially if you're not serving the potatoes the instant they leave the oven.

A light sprinkle of flaky sea salt right before serving also does double duty: it adds a final burst of seasoning and creates a subtle textural contrast against the soft interior, making each bite feel more dynamic.

The Foolproof Smashed Potatoes Recipe

Now that the myths are cleared up, here's the complete method, built on everything above.

Ingredients

- 1.5 to 2 pounds baby potatoes (Yukon Gold or red, uniform size)
- 4 tablespoons olive oil (or a combination of olive oil and melted butter)
- Kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, minced, for the Garlic Smashed Potatoes version
- Fresh herbs like rosemary or thyme
- Optional: parmesan, smoked paprika, chili flakes, or lemon zest for finishing

Instructions

1. Boil until just tender. Cover the potatoes with cold, well-salted water, bring to a boil, then simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Check with a paring knife you want no resistance, but not falling-apart softness.
2. Drain and air-dry. Let the potatoes sit uncovered in the colander for five minutes to release surface moisture.
3. Smash gently but firmly. Arrange on a parchment-lined tray with space between each potato, then press down with a glass or masher until they're about half an inch thick, with visible cracks.
4. Oil and season generously. Drizzle or brush oil into every crack, then season with salt, pepper, and garlic if using.
5. Roast at 425°F for 25 to 35 minutes. Flip halfway through for even browning on both sides. They're done when deeply golden and audibly crunchy.
6. Finish immediately. Top with fresh herbs, parmesan, or a squeeze of lemon and serve right away while the crust is at its peak.

Easy Smashed Potatoes: Simplifying Without Sacrificing Quality

Once you understand why each step matters, it becomes much easier to simplify the process without losing quality. A few legitimate shortcuts for Easy Smashed Potatoes on a weeknight:

- Par-cook in the microwave. Pierce the potatoes and microwave for 8 to 10 minutes as a stand-in for stovetop boiling.
- Do the smashing the night before. Boil and flatten the potatoes in advance, then refrigerate uncovered until you're ready to roast.
- Buy pre-washed baby potatoes. Skipping the scrubbing step saves a few minutes without affecting the final texture at all.

None of these shortcuts compromise the science behind the crispiness they just streamline the parts of the process that don't actually affect the final texture.

Garlic Smashed Potatoes: Three Ways to Add Flavor

Garlic deserves its own section because there's genuinely more than one good way to use it, and each method produces a slightly different result:

Minced and mixed into the oil before roasting gives you small, caramelized garlic bits throughout the crispy crust bold, nutty, and slightly sharp.

Whole roasted cloves, tucked among the potatoes on the tray, soften into a sweet, spreadable paste you can mash into a compound butter afterward.

A garlic butter finish, brushed on during the last five minutes of roasting, gives you a glossy, rich coating without any risk of the garlic burning.

Garlic Smashed Potatoes pair particularly well with rich seafood and steak dishes. If you're planning a dinner that leans indulgent, they're a natural companion to our [Creamy Shrimp Steak Surf N Turf](#), where the crunchy, garlicky potatoes balance the buttery richness of the main course.

Oven-Baked Smashed Potatoes: Rack Position and Timing Tips

A lot of the myths above focus on ingredients and technique, but oven behavior matters too. For the best Oven-Baked Smashed Potatoes:

- Use the middle rack for the first 20 minutes to ensure even cooking throughout
- Move to the top third of the oven for the final 5 to 10 minutes if you want extra browning
- Rotate the tray front to back halfway through if your oven runs unevenly
- Always preheat fully a cold oven start leads to steaming rather than immediate crisping

Building a Complete Meal Around Smashed Potatoes

This dish is flexible enough to anchor almost any dinner. Here are a few pairing ideas worth trying:

For a lighter plate: Balance the richness with something fresh and green, like our [Quick Easy Asparagus](#), which takes about 15 minutes and adds welcome contrast.

For a holiday table: Serve both crispy and soft textures side by side by pairing your batch with [Fluffy Roast Potatoes](#) guests get to choose their favorite.

For ultimate comfort food: Set them alongside [Loaded Baked Potatoes](#) for a potato-forward spread that covers every craving.

For a texture showdown: If your household is split on preferences, make a batch of [The Best Mashed Potatoes](#) as well, and let everyone decide which one wins.

Flavor Variations to Keep Things Interesting

Once the base method is second nature, these variations are worth experimenting with:

Smoky Chipotle Smashed Potatoes

Mix a small amount of chipotle powder into your oil for a deep, smoky heat that pairs well with grilled meats.

Rosemary Parmesan Smashed Potatoes

Toss with fresh rosemary and finish with freshly grated parmesan right out of the oven for a fragrant, savory bite.

Everything Bagel Smashed Potatoes

Sprinkle everything bagel seasoning over the potatoes in the last five minutes of roasting for a fun, crunchy twist.

Golden Smashed Potatoes With Brown Butter

Finish with a drizzle of nutty brown butter instead of plain melted butter for a deeper, more complex flavor.

Nutrition Snapshot

Despite their reputation, potatoes are a genuinely nutritious food. A serving of Smashed Potatoes provides:

- Potassium for cardiovascular and muscle health
- Vitamin C to support immune function
- Fiber, particularly since the skins stay intact throughout the process
- Complex carbohydrates for steady, longer-lasting energy

Because the oven-roasting method uses moderate oil rather than a deep fryer, this dish is a noticeably lighter alternative to traditional fries while still hitting that same crispy, salty craving.

Storing and Reheating for Best Results

Leftover Smashed Potatoes keep well in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to four days. To restore the crispy texture:

- Oven: 400°F for 10 to 12 minutes
- Air fryer: 375°F for 5 to 7 minutes

The microwave should be avoided for reheating, since it will soften the crust and undo all the crispy texture you worked to create in the first place.

Final Thoughts

The myths around Smashed Potatoes make the dish sound more complicated than it actually is. Once you understand why each step matters the right potato variety, controlled boiling, proper drying, generous oil, and adequate spacing the recipe becomes almost impossible to mess up. From there, it's simply a matter of choosing your favorite variation, whether that's a classic [Garlic Smashed Potatoes](#) preparation or a more adventurous take with smoky spices or everything bagel seasoning.

Give this method a try the next time you're planning a dinner, and don't be surprised if Crispy Smashed Potatoes become the dish everyone asks for by name.

Frequently Asked Questions(FAQs)

Why Do People Say Smashed Potatoes Are Hard to Make?

The reputation mostly comes from a few commonly skipped steps, such as not drying the potatoes enough, using too little oil, or overcrowding the pan. Once these details are addressed, the recipe is genuinely straightforward.

What's the Best Potato Variety for This Recipe?

Small, waxy potatoes like baby Yukon Golds or baby red potatoes work best because they hold their shape during boiling and smashing while still crisping beautifully in the oven.

Can I Make Garlic Smashed Potatoes If I Only Have Garlic Powder?

Yes, garlic powder is a fine substitute for fresh garlic. It provides a milder, more evenly distributed flavor, while fresh garlic creates more caramelized bits during roasting.

Is There a Way to Make This Dish Healthier?

Using olive oil instead of butter, going lighter on cheese toppings, and leaving the potato skins on for extra fiber are simple ways to make the dish lighter without sacrificing flavor.

How Small Should the Potatoes Be?

Aim for potatoes between 1.5 and 2 inches in diameter. Larger potatoes will take significantly longer to cook through and may not flatten as evenly.

Can I Reheat Smashed Potatoes and Still Get Them Crispy?

Yes. Reheat them in the oven or air fryer rather than the microwave. Both methods help restore the crunchy exterior, while microwaving tends to soften the crust.

Do Oven-Baked Smashed Potatoes Taste Different From Air-Fried Ones?

The flavor is nearly identical when using the same seasonings and oil. However, air-fried potatoes often develop a slightly more concentrated crunch because of the faster, more direct circulation of hot air.