

Pommes Puree

MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS; SERVES 6

Pommes Puree is a fancy version of mashed potatoes.

The secret to the silky texture is forcing the mash through a fine-mesh strainer after you rice them. You won't go to that trouble for an everyday meal, and the potatoes are still tasty without this step. But the texture of the strained potatoes is so exceedingly smooth and luscious that you have to try it for a special dinner.

This recipe is easily multiplied.

2 1/2 pounds Idaho potatoes (russets), whole and unpeeled
Kosher salt
16 tablespoons (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into large pieces
1 cup heavy cream
Freshly ground white pepper

Put the potatoes in a medium pot of salted water. Bring to a boil and cook until very tender (a cake tester or toothpick will pull out easily), 30 to 40 minutes. Drain the potatoes and allow them to cool just until you're able to handle them. Peel the potatoes while still quite hot (the skin will come off easily), put them in a potato ricer, and rice them into a large bowl.

Meanwhile, heat the butter and cream together over low heat until the butter melts. Using a wooden spoon, stir this mixture into the potatoes. Continue mixing until all the lumps are gone, but don't overmix or the potatoes will become gluey. You can serve them as is, which is nice and homey. Or, for an incredibly smooth puree, pass the potatoes through a fine-mesh strainer. Either way, taste and season with salt and a few grinds of white pepper before serving.

MAKE AHEAD: These are definitely best if served right away, but you can make them a few hours ahead and carefully reheat them over low heat.

Recipes adapted from Stir: Mixing It Up in the Italian Tradition by Barbara Lynch and published by Houghton Mifflin