

Brandade Potato Latkes

OLD COOKBOOKS OF JEWISH FAMILIES from Provence and descendants of the Juifs du Pape contain a famous dish combining spinach and *morue*.

Morue is also blended with mashed potatoes to make *brandade*, a typical dish of the south of France. The preserved fish is rehydrated in milk or water, and then grilled, fried, or baked. Fritters were particularly common, and are still prevalent throughout Spain and Portugal.

This recipe, a modern interpretation of a traditional salt- cod- and- potato *brandade*, was created by Chef Daniel Rose . He uses fresh cod, salting it briefly to remove the excess moisture, seasons it with thyme and garlic, and then cooks it in milk and olive oil. Mixed with mashed potatoes and fried, the result yields a sort of latke that can be served as an appetizer, a side dish, or a main course, with a fennel- and- citrus salad.

Yield: 16 Latkes

2 pounds fresh cod, skin and bones removed
Sea salt to taste
½ cup olive oil
1 cup milk
5 sprigs fresh thyme, or
1 teaspoon dried thyme
8 cloves garlic, crushed
2½ pounds russet potatoes, peeled and halved
1 large egg, well beaten
2 cups matzo meal or fine, dry bread crumbs, plus more if needed for batter
Freshly ground pepper to taste
Vegetable oil for frying

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees.

Liberally coat each side of the cod with sea salt, about 3 tablespoons in all, and let rest for 15 minutes. Rinse the cod with cold water, and pat dry with paper towels.

Place the cod in an 8- by- 12- inch baking dish or rimmed jelly- roll pan. Pour the olive oil and the milk over it, and lay the thyme sprigs and garlic on top. Cover with aluminum foil, and cook for 20 minutes, or until the fish is just cooked and begins to flake apart. When the fish has cooked, remove it, reserving the thyme and the cooking liquid; discard the garlic.

Meanwhile, put the potatoes in a large pot of cold water and season with 2 tablespoons sea salt. Bring the water to a boil, and cook the potatoes until a knife passes effortlessly through them. Strain in a colander and return to the pot, cooking over very low heat for about 4 minutes to get rid of any excess moisture. Remove from the heat, and mash in the pot until smooth.

Lightly beat the egg in a large bowl. Stir the mashed potatoes, little by little, into the egg. Add the leaves of the reserved thyme.

Using a fork, flake the cod, and then fold it into the mashed potatoes.

If the batter is too stiff, mix ¼ cup to ½ cup of the reserved cod- cooking liquid into the batter. On the other hand, if the batter

does not hold together, add up to ¼ cup matzo meal. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper if needed. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Heat about ¼ inch of vegetable oil in a large skillet. Scoop up

¼ or ½ cup of the cod- potato mixture. Form into a ½- inch- thick disk, and roll it in the matzo meal or bread crumbs. Fry in batches of two or three for about 2 minutes on each side, or until golden. Drain on paper towels. Repeat with the remaining cod- potato mixture. Reheat, if necessary, on a baking sheet in a 350- degree oven.