

RV GODDESS: Potato Gnocchi

Here is my recipe for potato gnocchi - fluffy little pillow-like dumplings. Tossed with butter, a red sauce, or a little pesto, gnocchi are a tasty little addition to your usual Italian repertoire. Plus, they are fun to make. This really isn't a recipe, so to speak. Egg, salt, and flour are added to warm riced/*smished* potatoes until a smooth dough is formed. The cook needs to go more by feel and intuition than following precise measurements.

Two large russet (baking) potatoes, about one pound
1 egg, beaten
Approximately ½ cup all-purpose white flour,
plus additional flour for dusting the work surface
½ teaspoon Kosher salt



1. Start with two russet potatoes, about one pound of Idaho's finest will do. Bake them for about one hour at 400°. (Actually, if you have any old potatoes, use them in this recipe. Older potatoes have a higher starch content, and your gnocchi will be even better.) When the potatoes are tender, about one hour, remove them to a plate and let the potatoes cool for ten minutes. Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise and use a spoon to scoop the flesh into a bowl. Discard the skin.



2. It is traditional to run the hot potato flesh through a ricer, but if you think I am going to get my ricer off the shelf and get it dirty for two potatoes... well, I am not going to do that. It is also possible to push the potatoes through a wire sieve to "rice" them. Me? I broke the potatoes apart with a fork. A potato masher would also work.



3. Then, while the potato is still pretty hot, mix in a beaten egg. Stir quickly so the egg does not cook and then add about 1/3 cup of all-purpose white flour and a large pinch of Kosher salt. Mix well with a spatula or wooden spoon, adding a little more flour until it feels like a very soft pizza dough. The amount of flour is going to vary with the size of your potatoes and the size of your egg. I used 1/2 cup.



4. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface and knead it for about one minute, until fairly smooth. Incorporate more flour as needed until the dough is not sticky, but is still soft. It is important to work quickly - the dough should be warm throughout the process.



5. Divide the dough into four even portions and roll each portion out into a long sausage, about the thickness of your thumb.



6. Cut into 3/4-to-1-inch-long segments. If you choose, you can roll the potato dumplings on a gnocchi board to leave a slight indentation on each gnocchi. It is not necessary - just traditional. Some chefs swear the little ridges hold the sauce better. (The best gnocchi ever were served at Biba in Sacramento. Biba did not roll her gnocchi at all. So there.)



7. If you don't have a gnocchi board, simply roll the gnocchi along the back tines of a dinner fork.



8. Continue rolling (*or not* rolling) the gnocchi, repeating the process with the remaining three portions of dough. Place the finished dumplings on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. This batch produced just over 50 gnocchi. At this point, the gnocchi can be cooked right away, or covered with a kitchen towel and refrigerated for a few hours before boiling. Another option is to freeze the gnocchi on the tray and then transfer the frozen pillows to a freezer container or ziptop bag.



9. To cook gnocchi, simply drop them - in batches, do not crowd the pot - into a large pot of salted boiling water and give them a little stir. The gnocchi will sit at the bottom of the pan for a minute or two and then will float to the surface when they have finished cooking. Let them bubble at the surface for 30 seconds before removing the gnocchi with a slotted spoon. (To cook frozen gnocchi, simply drop the frozen dumplings into a pot of salted boiling water. They will pop to the surface when they have finished cooking, but it will take about five minutes.)



10. Transfer the gnocchi directly to a waiting warm sauce, give it a quick stir and serve! Serves 2-3 as a main course, 6 as an appetizer course. (Potato Gnocchi, pictured left, are tossed with a little basil pesto - garnished with pecorino cheese and toasted pine nuts.)

