

# "MAKE-ME-NOW" SESAME-CRUSTED SMASHED POTATOES WITH DREAMY GREEN TAHINI SAUCE AND LABNE

Serves 4

**REMEMBER, BEST PRACTICE: READ THE RECIPE ALL THE WAY THROUGH BEFORE YOU START COOKING!**

This recipe is totally addictive, and debatably even more so when made with Japanese sweet potatoes— purple or white, dense and slightly dry. (American sweet potatoes/yams will work but because of their higher moisture content, won't caramelize quite as intensely.) The sesame crust becomes savory-sweet and burnished: a pretty brilliant balance to the herby-nutty-sweet-spicy tahini sauce.

Make these potatoes with salad, as per the recipe, or alongside ANYTHING. They're great with steak, fish, and vegetable mains of all kinds, eggs, etc. You get the point... let the etc.'s run wild! The tahini sauce is delicious with basically anything that lands on a plate, which is great, because the recipe makes a bit extra.

**1 ½ pounds medium Yukon Gold (or any other waxy, yellow potato) or Japanese sweet potatoes (about 8 Yukons or 2 large sweet potatoes)**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1 small clove garlic, grated**

**1 jalapeño**

**3 tablespoons tahini, from a well-stirred jar**

**3 tablespoons olive oil, plus additional for drizzling and dressing salad**

**⅓ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice, from 2 lemons, plus 1 lemon for dressing salad, if desired**

**1 tablespoon honey**

**1 small bunch of cilantro (and 1 bunch parsley, if desired; a mix is nice here but not necessary)**

**1 (2-ounce) jar untoasted sesame seeds (about a scant ½ cup)**

**Lettuces for serving, such as radicchio, baby gems, arugula, and/or bibb; if desired**

**1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved, for serving; if desired**

**Labne, for serving (sour cream or yogurt make a fine sub)**

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees and position a rack in the center. Line a rimmed 13" x 18" baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. Place 1 ½ pounds of potatoes in a medium pot and cover with cold water by an inch. Generously salt the water. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce to maintain a steady boil, and cook until potatoes are just tender when pierced with a toothpick, about 15-22 minutes. (The sweet potatoes will take on the longer side of this window to cook, as they're firmer and bigger than Yukons.) You can boil the potatoes far in advance, as well; keep at room temperature until ready to roast.

3. While the potatoes boil, make the tahini dressing. Finely grate 1 small clove of garlic into the bowl of a blender or a mini prep. Cut the jalapeño in half lengthwise and add half to the blender, reserving the remainder to add later, if desired. (Every jalapeño is different, of course, so best to start small.) Add 3 tablespoons of tahini, 3 tablespoons of olive oil, ⅓ cup of lemon juice, 1 tablespoon of honey, 1 ½ teaspoons of salt, and 2 tablespoons of water. Blend until smooth.

Cut the leafy tops off of one small bunch of cilantro. Totally okay to include the stems. Reserve some leaves for serving and measure 1 cup packed. (Supplement with parsley, if desired. A mix is nice here.) Roughly chop and add to the blender. Process until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. If you need to add an additional 1 tablespoon of water to get the mixture going, go for it. Taste. Add more lemon juice or salt if the flavors don't absolutely pop and sing. If you want it spicier, add more of the jalapeño.

4. Drain the potatoes. When cool enough to handle, cut each one in half. (If using Japanese sweet potatoes, cut them first in half lengthwise and then crosswise into 3-inch sections.) Season the cut sides of the potatoes generously with salt and pepper.

5. Pour the 2-ounce jar of sesame seeds onto a plate. Working with one potato at a time, press the cut side into the sesame seeds, lifting and lowering like a stamp pad, until the cut side is thoroughly covered. Next, using your palm, smash the potato into the sesame seeds until flattened to about ½-inch in thickness. You're going for craggy, rough edges, which will yield superb crispiness when roasted, so don't hold back with the smashing! Lift and dip, stamp-style, to ensure max coverage with the seeds.

If the potatoes fall apart, you may have overcooked them a touch. Don't worry! You'll just end up with slightly more broken up pieces of potatoes. Just be sure to smash sufficiently into the sesame seeds to encrust. (Also, room temp potatoes will be less delicate and easier to work with than hot ones, so let them cool if necessary.)

6. Pour a small drizzle of olive oil onto the top corner of the parchment on the baking sheet. Place the potato, sesame seed side down, directly on top of the olive oil, giving a gentle swirl to distribute the oil on the bottom of the potato. This will help to seal the crust and turn the potato roasty-toasty. Repeat with the remaining potatoes— smashing into sesame seeds, drizzling oil on the parchment, and placing potatoes on top of the oil— working systematically as you oil and space the potatoes, so as not to have to do much rearranging later on. (The goal is not to disturb the bottom crust of sesame seeds too much once they land on the baking sheet.)

7. Lightly drizzle the tops of the potatoes with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to the oven and roast, rotating the baking sheet halfway through, until the tops of the potatoes are golden and crinkly and the sesame crust on the bottom is a medium-golden hue, about 35-45 minutes. If you're finding that the bottoms aren't toasting, try moving the sheet pan to a lower rack in the oven.

8. If serving with salad, assemble the lettuces, cherry tomatoes, and reserved herbs in a large bowl while the potatoes roast. When ready to serve, toss salad components with a spoonful or two of the tahini dressing, a generous squeeze of lemon juice from the remaining lemon, and a nice pour of olive oil. Season vigorously with salt and pepper. This is where you need to rely on yourself to taste, season, and adjust until the lettuces are well-dressed and delicious. Keep adding more— dressing, acid, oil, salt— and continue TASTING until the flavors sing.

9. Plate up! Divide the green tahini among serving plates. (You may have extra sauce.) Add a dollop of labne to each plate and top with the potatoes, salad, tomatoes, and extra herbs.

# NOODLE