

Scalloped potatoes with blue cheese and roasted garlic

GRATIN DE POMMES DE TERRE AU BLEU ET À L'AIL CONFIT

Serves 8

Although I've confessed to never being comfortable with the term *comfort food*, I'll admit it's a pretty spot-on moniker for potato gratin. Pouring cream over a dish of potatoes and adding some blue cheese and garlic, mellowed and sweetened by oven roasting, elevates a common tuber into a dish you want to smuggle up to, spooning up the long-cooked potatoes with pockets of oozing cheese between them, and not stopping until you've scraped the last browned, caramelized bits off the sides of the baking dish. Whew! Come to think of it, now I'm feeling all comfy and drowsy myself.

When assembling this bliss-inducing dish, I like to keep the cheese in fairly large chunks so it doesn't get lost among all the potato slices. As for the potatoes, a buttery-flavored potato, such as Yukon Gold, works well here. Russet potatoes are good candidates for layering in a gratin, too. Cream is traditionally used, which reduces in the oven to a rich, buttery *nappage*, but half-and-half can take its place if you're not comfortable with all that cream. Serve with *caillettes* (page 185) or with a green salad, as lunch.

10 large cloves garlic
Olive oil
3 cups (750ml) heavy cream or half-and-half
2½ pounds (1.2kg) potatoes
Sea salt or kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup (15g) minced fresh chives
1½ cups (195g) coarsely crumbled blue cheese

- 1 Preheat the oven to 375°F (180°C).
- 2 Trim the hard stem ends off the unpeeled garlic cloves and place them on a piece of aluminum foil that's large enough to envelop them. Drizzle in a small amount of olive oil, close the foil packet securely, and roast in the oven for 45 minutes, until the cloves are lightly caramelized. (You can also do this a few days ahead when you are using the oven for something else, which is what I usually do.) Leave the oven on and move the oven rack to the top third of the oven.
- 3 Remove the garlic from its skins and mash the cloves in a saucepan with a few spoonfuls of the cream to make a paste. Put the saucepan over low heat and add the remaining cream; heat until warmed through and then set aside.

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