



## ROOT VEGETABLE GRATIN

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** For a lighter alternative to classic potato gratin, we wanted to supplement the starchy potatoes with more flavorful root vegetables—but first we needed to figure out how to cook them all evenly. To keep the potatoes from breaking down before the celery root and rutabaga slices were finished, we added dry white wine to the creamy cooking liquid. Incorporating flour into the liquid bound the layers of sliced vegetables. Dijon mustard offered a spicy, savory boost. A sprinkling of bold aromatics—chopped onion, fresh thyme, minced garlic, and black pepper—between the alternating layers infused the gratin with hearty flavors. Pressing the layers down after adding the liquid compacted the gratin, ensuring that the slices clung together nicely. A sprinkling of panko bread crumbs, Parmesan, and melted butter added with 15 minutes left in the oven created a golden crust.

### Root Vegetable Gratin

SERVES 6 TO 8

Uniformly thin slices are necessary for a cohesive gratin. We recommend a mandoline for quick and even slicing, but a sharp chef's knife will also work. Because the vegetables in the gratin are tightly packed into the casserole dish, it will still be plenty hot after a 25-minute rest.

- 1 tablespoon plus 1½ cups water
- 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
- Salt and pepper
- ⅔ cup dry white wine
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ onion, chopped fine
- 1¼ teaspoons minced fresh thyme
- 1 garlic clove, minced

- 2 pounds large Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and sliced lengthwise ¼ inch thick
- 1 large celery root (1 pound), peeled, quartered, and sliced ¼ inch thick
- 1 pound rutabaga, peeled, quartered, and sliced ¼ inch thick
- ¾ cup panko bread crumbs
- 1½ ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (¾ cup)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Whisk 1 tablespoon water, mustard, flour, and 1½ teaspoons salt in medium bowl until smooth. Add wine, cream, and remaining 1½ cups water; whisk to combine. Combine onion, thyme, garlic, and ¼ teaspoon pepper in second bowl.

2. Layer half of potatoes in prepared dish, arranging so they form even thickness. Sprinkle half of onion mixture evenly over potatoes. Arrange celery root and rutabaga slices in even layer over onions. Sprinkle remaining onion mixture over celery root and rutabaga. Layer remaining potatoes over onions. Slowly pour water mixture over vegetables. Using rubber spatula, gently press down on vegetables to create even, compact layer. Cover tightly with aluminum foil and bake for 50 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake until knife inserted into center of gratin meets no resistance, 20 to 25 minutes longer.

3. While gratin bakes, combine panko, Parmesan, and butter in bowl and season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove gratin from oven and sprinkle evenly with panko mixture. Continue to bake until panko is golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes longer. Remove gratin from oven and let stand for 25 minutes. Serve.

## CAULIFLOWER GRATIN

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** We set out to create a cauliflower gratin that was flavorful and fresh, not rich and stodgy. We relied on cauliflower's ability to become an ultracreamy puree and used that as a sauce to bind florets together. To ensure that we had enough cauliflower to use in two ways, we used two heads. We removed the cores and stems and steamed them until soft; then blended them to make the sauce. We cut each cored head into slabs, which made for a more compact casserole and helped the florets cook more evenly. For an efficient cooking setup, we placed the cauliflower cores and stems in water in the bottom of a Dutch oven and set a steamer basket filled with the florets on top. Butter and Parmesan, plus a little cornstarch, gave the sauce a richer flavor and texture without making it too heavy, and a few pantry spices lent complexity. Tossing the florets in the sauce before placing them in the dish ensured that they were completely coated. A crisp topping of Parmesan and panko gave the gratin savory crunch, while a final garnish of minced chives added color.

## Modern Cauliflower Gratin

SERVES 8 TO 10

When buying cauliflower, look for heads without many leaves. Alternatively, if your cauliflower does have a lot of leaves, buy slightly larger heads—about 2¼ pounds each. This recipe can be halved to serve 4 to 6; cook the cauliflower in a large saucepan and bake the gratin in an 8-inch square baking dish.

- 2 heads cauliflower (2 pounds each)
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup panko bread crumbs
- 2 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (1 cup)
- Salt and pepper
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch dissolved in 1 teaspoon water
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees.

2. Pull off outer leaves of 1 head of cauliflower and trim stem. Using paring knife, cut around core to remove; halve core lengthwise and slice thin crosswise. Slice head into ½-inch-thick slabs. Cut stems from slabs to create florets that are about 1½ inches tall; slice stems thin and reserve along with sliced core. Transfer florets to bowl, including any small pieces that may have been created during trimming, and set aside. Repeat with remaining head of cauliflower. (After trimming you should have about 3 cups of sliced stems and cores and 12 cups of florets.)



3. Combine sliced stems and cores, 2 cups florets, 3 cups water, and 6 tablespoons butter in Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat. Place remaining florets in steamer basket (do not rinse bowl). Once mixture is boiling, place steamer basket in pot, cover, and reduce heat to medium. Steam florets in basket until translucent and stem ends can be easily pierced with paring knife, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove steamer basket and drain florets. Re-cover pot, reduce heat to low, and continue to cook stem mixture until very soft, about 10 minutes longer. Transfer drained florets to now-empty bowl.

4. While cauliflower is cooking, melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add panko and cook, stirring frequently, until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to bowl and let cool. Once cool, add ½ cup Parmesan and toss to combine.

5. Transfer stem mixture and cooking liquid to blender and add 2 teaspoons salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, mustard, nutmeg, cayenne, and remaining ½ cup Parmesan. Process until smooth and velvety, about 1 minute (puree should be pourable; adjust consistency with additional water as needed). With blender running, add cornstarch slurry. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour puree over cauliflower florets and toss gently to evenly coat. Transfer mixture to 13 by 9-inch baking dish (it will be quite loose) and smooth top with spatula.

6. Scatter bread-crumble mixture evenly over top. Transfer dish to oven and bake until sauce bubbles around edges, 13 to 15 minutes. Let stand for 20 to 25 minutes. Sprinkle with chives and serve.

## DUCK FAT-ROASTED POTATOES

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** For the ultimate side of roasted potatoes, we needed spuds that could take on meaty duck fat flavor and a crisp crust before drying out. Briefly boiling peeled, cut Yukon Golds in a solution of water, salt, and baking soda broke down the potatoes' pectin, causing them to release a wet starch that rapidly browns. After draining, we returned the pot to the stove to evaporate any moisture and then, off heat, stirred in enough duck fat to give the potatoes some distinct flavor. Stirring the potatoes released a thick paste that ensured a crunchy shell and roasting the pieces on a preheated baking sheet kick-started the crisping. To infuse the potatoes with richness and herbal flavors, we stirred in a mixture of rosemary and more duck fat toward the end of cooking.

### Duck Fat-Roasted Potatoes

SERVES 6

Duck fat is available in the meat department in many supermarkets. Alternatively, substitute chicken fat, lard, or a mixture of 3 tablespoons of bacon fat and 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil.