- Prep time: 15 minutes
- Cook time: 15 minutes
- Total time: 30 minutes
- Yield: Approximately 12 pancakes (serves 4)
- Course: Side Dish / Breakfast
- Cuisine: Eastern European / American

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Ingredients

For the Pancakes:

- 2 lbs (900g) Russet potatoes (about 4 medium-large potatoes), peeled and grated
- 1 small yellow onion, grated
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup (60g) all-purpose flour (or Matzo meal for a traditional Passover version)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp baking powder (optional, for extra fluffiness)
- Vegetable oil (Canola or Peanut oil) for frying

For Serving (Optional):

- Sour cream
- Applesauce

- Fresh chives, chopped

Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Potatoes (Intensity: Medium)

The most critical step in making potato pancakes is managing the water content. Potatoes are mostly water, and if you skip this step, your pancakes will steam rather than fry, resulting in a soggy texture.

Grate the peeled potatoes and the onion using the fine side of a box grater or a food processor with a grating disc. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl of cold water immediately to prevent oxidation (browning).

Step 2: Squeeze Out the Moisture (Intensity: High)

This is the “arm workout” portion of the recipe. Drain the potato-onion mixture in a colander. Then, working in batches, wrap the mixture in a clean kitchen towel or several layers of cheesecloth. Twist the towel tightly and squeeze over the sink with all your might. You want to extract as much liquid as possible—often up to a cup of liquid. The drier the mixture, the crispier the pancake.

Step 3: Mix the Batter (Intensity: Low)

In a large mixing bowl, combine the squeezed potato mixture, beaten eggs, flour, salt, pepper, and baking powder (if using). Mix with a fork until the ingredients are evenly distributed. The mixture should look like a thick, sticky batter. Let it rest for 5 minutes; if liquid pools at the bottom, drain it before frying.

Step 4: Heat the Pan (Intensity: Low)

Heat a large, heavy-bottomed skillet (cast iron is excellent) over medium-high heat. Add about 1/4 inch of vegetable oil. The oil is ready when a small drop of batter sizzles immediately upon contact. You are looking for a temperature of roughly 350°F (175°C) . If the oil is too cool, the pancakes absorb grease; if too hot, they burn before the potato cooks.

Step 5: Fry the Pancakes (Intensity: Medium)

Using a 1/4 cup measuring cup or a large spoon, drop the batter into the hot oil. Flatten each mound slightly with the back of a spatula to ensure even cooking.

Fry for 3 to 4 minutes per side. You are looking for a deep golden brown color and crispy edges. Do not crowd the pan; fry in batches of 3 or 4 depending on pan size to maintain the oil temperature.

Step 6: Drain and Keep Warm (Intensity: Low)

Transfer the cooked pancakes to a wire cooling rack lined with paper towels. (Using a wire rack instead of a paper towel-lined plate prevents the bottom from getting soggy from steam). If you need to keep them warm while frying the rest, place the rack on a baking sheet in a 200°F (90°C) oven.

Recipe Notes & Tips

- The Potato Choice: Russet potatoes are the gold standard here. They have high starch content, which binds the pancakes better and yields a crispier exterior. Waxy potatoes (like red potatoes) hold too much water and tend to be gluey.

- The Onion Factor: Grating the onion releases juices that can also make the batter wet. Some chefs grate the onion and squeeze it separately, adding the dry pulp to the potatoes and discarding the juice.

- Keep it Crispy: Serve the pancakes immediately. If you stack them on top of each other, they will steam and lose their crunch. Serve them flat on a platter or individually plated.

Nutrition Information

Disclaimer: The following nutrition information is an estimate per serving (3 pancakes) and will vary based on exact ingredient sizes and the amount of oil absorbed during frying.

- Calories: 320 kcal

- Total Fat: 14g (2g Saturated Fat)

- Cholesterol: 95mg

- Sodium: 450mg

- Total Carbohydrates: 40g

- Dietary Fiber: 3g

- Total Sugars: 2g
- Protein: 7g
- Vitamin C: 15% DV
- Iron: 10% DV
- Potassium: 800mg