

Prep Time: 20 minutes | Cook Time: 25 minutes | Chill Time: 2 hours minimum | Total Time: ~2 hours 45 minutes | Difficulty: Easy

Table of Contents



- [Introduction](#)
- [Ingredients](#)
 - [For the Salad](#)
 - [For the Dressing](#)
- [Equipment](#)
- [Instructions](#)
 - [Step 1: Boil the Potatoes \(Time: 20-25 minutes | Intensity: Low-Medium\)](#)
 - [Step 2: Hard-Boil the Eggs \(Time: 12 minutes | Intensity: Low\)](#)
 - [Step 3: Cut the Warm Potatoes \(Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low\)](#)
 - [Step 4: Make the Dressing \(Time: 3 minutes | Intensity: Low\)](#)
 - [Step 5: Combine the Salad \(Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low\)](#)
 - [Step 6: Chill \(Time: 2 hours minimum | Intensity: None\)](#)
 - [Step 7: Garnish and Serve \(Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Low\)](#)
- [Tips for the Best Southern Potato Salad](#)
- [Variations](#)
- [Storage](#)
- [Nutrition Information \(Per Serving\)](#)

Introduction

There are few dishes more sacred in the American South than potato salad. It shows up at every church potluck, family reunion, backyard barbecue, and holiday table—and every family swears theirs is the best. This classic Southern-style potato salad is creamy, tangy, and just a little sweet, with the perfect balance of textures: tender potatoes, crunchy celery

and onion, and a rich, mustard-kissed dressing. It's the ideal companion to pulled pork, fried chicken, burgers, or smoked ribs.

The secret to a truly Southern potato salad is threefold: use the right potato (Yukon Golds or red potatoes hold their shape), salt the cooking water generously, and dress the potatoes while they're still warm so they soak up all that flavor. This recipe keeps things traditional but foolproof, so even a first-timer can nail it.

Ingredients

For the Salad

- 2½ lbs (about 1.1 kg) Yukon Gold or red potatoes, peeled (or unpeeled, if you prefer)
- 1 tablespoon salt (for the cooking water)
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup celery, finely diced (about 3 ribs)
- ½ cup yellow onion, finely diced (or 3–4 green onions, sliced)
- ½ cup dill pickle relish (or sweet relish, to taste)
- ¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped (optional, for garnish)

For the Dressing

- 1 cup mayonnaise (Duke's or Hellmann's recommended)
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar (or pickle juice)
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika (plus more for garnish)
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional, for a subtle kick)

Equipment

- Large pot for boiling potatoes
 - Small saucepan for hard-boiling eggs
 - Colander
 - Large mixing bowl
 - Whisk
 - Spatula
 - Plastic wrap or lid
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Instructions

Step 1: Boil the Potatoes (Time: 20-25 minutes | Intensity: Low-Medium)

Place the peeled potatoes in a large pot and cover with cold water by about 2 inches. Add 1 tablespoon of salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Cook for 15-20 minutes, until a knife slides easily into the center of the largest potato. Do not overcook—mushy potatoes make mushy salad. Drain immediately in a colander and let cool for 5-10 minutes, just until cool enough to handle.

Step 2: Hard-Boil the Eggs (Time: 12 minutes | Intensity: Low)

While the potatoes cook, place the eggs in a small saucepan and cover with cold water by 1 inch. Bring to a rolling boil, then cover, remove from heat, and let sit for 10–12 minutes. Transfer eggs to an ice bath for 5 minutes, then peel and chop. Set aside.

Step 3: Cut the Warm Potatoes (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Cut the drained, slightly cooled potatoes into ½-inch cubes. Place them in a large mixing bowl. Dressing them while warm helps them absorb flavor.

Step 4: Make the Dressing (Time: 3 minutes | Intensity: Low)

In a medium bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, yellow mustard, apple cider vinegar, sugar, salt, black pepper, smoked paprika, garlic powder, and cayenne (if using). Taste and adjust—Southern potato salad should be tangy, creamy, and slightly sweet.

Step 5: Combine the Salad (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Pour the dressing over the warm potatoes. Add the chopped eggs, diced celery, onion, and pickle relish. Gently fold everything together with a spatula until evenly coated. Be careful not to mash the potatoes.

Step 6: Chill (Time: 2 hours minimum | Intensity: None)

Cover the bowl tightly and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight. This resting period is essential—it lets the flavors meld and the dressing thicken.

Step 7: Garnish and Serve (Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Just before serving, give the salad a gentle stir. If it looks dry, fold in 1–2 extra tablespoons of mayonnaise. Dust the top with smoked paprika and sprinkle with fresh parsley. Serve cold or

at cool room temperature.

Tips for the Best Southern Potato Salad

1. Choose waxy potatoes. Yukon Golds and red potatoes hold their shape. Avoid russets, which turn grainy.
 2. Salt the water, not just the salad. Potatoes absorb seasoning best during boiling.
 3. Dress them warm. Warm potatoes drink up the dressing like a sponge.
 4. Don't overmix. Fold gently to keep the cubes intact.
 5. Make it a day ahead. Like chili and gumbo, this salad tastes even better the next day.
 6. Adjust the relish. Sweet relish gives a classic Southern flavor; dill relish gives a tangier bite. Use what your family loves.
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Variations

- Bacon Ranch Potato Salad: Add ½ cup cooked, crumbled bacon and swap ½ cup mayo for ranch dressing.

- Deviled Egg Potato Salad: Double the eggs and add 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard plus extra paprika.
- No-Mayo Version: Substitute Greek yogurt or sour cream for a lighter take.
- Spicy Southern: Add 1 minced jalapeño and a dash of hot sauce to the dressing.

Storage

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Do not leave potato salad at room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is above 90°F/32°C). Stir before serving and add a splash of mayo if needed. This salad does not freeze well—the potatoes become watery and grainy.

Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Based on 10 servings. Values are estimates and will vary by brand and exact quantities.

Nutrient		Amount
Calories		~310 kcal
Total Fat		~21 g
Saturated Fat		~3.5 g
Cholesterol		~95 mg
Sodium		~520 mg
Total Carbohydrates		~24 g

	Nutrient	Amount
	Dietary Fiber	~2 g
	Total Sugars	~4 g
	Protein	~6 g
	Vitamin A	~4% DV
	Vitamin C	~15% DV
	Calcium	~3% DV
	Iron	~6% DV