

TWICE BAKED POTATOES

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Ingredients:

- 4 large russet potatoes
- 4 - 8 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 4 tablespoons chives, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Optional Toppings:

- Bacon
- Chopped tomatoes
- Salsa

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Wash the potatoes with a soft brush or clean scouring sponge. Do not wrap the potatoes in aluminum foil as you typically would to make baked potatoes as it will keep the skins soft. We want the skin to be firm to provide a vessel strong enough to hold the filling securely.



Set the potatoes on a baking sheet, place in the center of the oven and bake for 30 minutes. For even and thorough baking, pierce each potato several times with a fork and continue to bake until tender, about 30 minutes longer. Remove potatoes from the oven, and turn the heat down to 375 degrees. While the potatoes are still warm, cut in half lengthwise. Using a spoon, carefully scoop out most of the potato into a bowl. Take care to leave enough potato in the skin so the shells hold together.

Mash the potatoes lightly with fork. Add butter and sour cream. Stir in scallions, shredded cheese and season with salt and pepper. If you like, you can add bacon to the potato mixture. I find that when I add bacon to the mixture, all I taste is the bacon so I prefer to sprinkle with chopped bacon before serving. Season the empty potato shells with salt and pepper and sprinkle with a teaspoon of grated cheese. Refill with the potato mixture mounding it slightly.

You may not have enough filling to refill all of the potatoes, but if you mound the mixture, most people will only eat a single half. I top my potatoes with cheese after they come out of the oven. If you top the potatoes with cheese before returning them to the oven, the cheese will harden and form a crust. I prefer my cheese soft and gooey. If you are not planning to eat the potatoes immediately, cover with plastic wrap and place into the refrigerator until ready to reheat. When ready to serve, set the potatoes back onto a baking sheet and bake until heated through, about 20 minutes.

Remove from oven and sprinkle the cheese while still hot. You may want to keep them in the oven for a minute or two until the cheese is thoroughly melted. If you like, top the warm potatoes with chopped tomatoes and bacon. Serve immediately. Enjoy!