



INGREDIENTS

Serves 4 generously

- 12 Cumberland or Lincolnshire sausages
- vegetable oil for frying
- 12 Desiree potatoes, peeled and evenly sliced
- ¼ weight of butter to potatoes, diced
- 200 ml (7 fl. oz) milk
- salt and pepper
- 6-7 brown onions, peeled and finely sliced
- 1 litre (35 fl. oz) of beef granules gravy

METHOD

Mash

- 1 Wash the slices of potato under cold running water to rinse off any free starch.
- 2 Place the potato pieces in a saucepan of warm water at 75°C/150°F. It's important to maintain this temperature, adding cold water if necessary. Allow the potatoes to cook for 20-30 minutes.
- 3 Drain the potatoes, and immediately run them under cold water until they feel cool. Leave them for half an hour.
- 4 Drop them into boiling water and then lower the heat to a simmer. Cook until you can easily stick a knife in them. If they begin to fall apart you have over-cooked them.
- 5 Drain the potatoes and gently push them through a ricer. (A ricer is a type of potato masher but far more delicate. It looks like a giant garlic press.)
- 6 Heat the milk in a pan until just boiling and remove from the heat. Add the potato mash and with a spatula mix the two together gradually adding the diced butter.
- 7 Season to taste.

Onion gravy

- 1 Heat a dry pan and add the onions. Use a pan which has some height to the sides and ideally non-stick.
- 2 After about 10-15 minutes the pan will be awash with liquid. Let this evaporate. Then the onions will start to brown and caramelize. Be brave and cook them until they are well caramelised. Every so often scrape the pan to remove the caramelisation.
- 3 Prepare the gravy of beef granules according to taste. Add it to the pan of onions and simmer for a minute.

Sausages

- 1 Gently fry the sausages in a pan with a tiny bit of oil until they are evenly brown, firm to touch and cooked through.
- 2 Serve them with the gravy and mash.



ABOUT POTATOES



Cut potatoes go brown in the air because they contain an enzyme (called polyphenol oxidase or tyrosinase) that reacts with oxygen and iron-containing phenols that are also found in the potato. The oxidation reaction basically forms a sort of rust on the surface. You see the browning when the potato is cut because this damages the cells, releasing the enzyme. The reaction can be slowed or prevented by inactivating the enzyme with heat (cooking), reducing the pH on the surface of the potato (by adding lemon juice or another acid), or reducing the amount of available oxygen (by putting the potatoes under water). Using cutlery that has some corrosion on it can increase the rate and amount of browning (oxidation) by making more iron salts available for the reaction.

- Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XV, was known to wear potato blossoms as a hair decoration.
- There are 1000s of different varieties of potato, including ones with red flesh (Highland Red) and ones with blue skin (Salad Blue). There is even a red, white and blue heritage potato, Yetholm Gypsy.
- 'New potatoes' is a term most frequently used to describe those freshly harvested and marketed during late winter or early spring. The name is also widely used in later crop-producing areas to designate freshly dug potatoes which are not quite fully matured. These potatoes are best used for boiling or creaming. They vary widely in size and shape, depending upon variety, but are likely to be affected by 'skinning' or 'feathering' of the outer layer of skin. This skinning usually affects only their appearance.
- The potato plant was the first plant to sample life at zero gravity when it was grown aboard Space Shuttle Columbia in 1995.
- USA's Vice-President Dan Quayle had a moment of embarrassment in 1992 when, on a visit to a school, a 12-year-old pupil wrote 'potato' on a blackboard. The Vice-President told him that he had spelt it incorrectly and that it should have an 'e' at the end.

If you want to learn more about the importance of a variety of food for human nutrition, then you might like to take our science short course, *Understanding human nutrition* (SK183).



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