

## *In the Vineyard Marinated Potato Salad*

*Long before Lodi had dozens of tasting rooms, I started making this tangy marinated potato salad to take along on my wine tasting trips to Sonoma County. Standard potato salads from the supermarket deli were too creamy, bland, and unappealing. The lightly marinated potatoes in this salad stand up to the acid in both red and white wines. The vegetable garden aroma pairs perfectly with Bordeaux varietals (Cabernet, Merlot, etc.). It looks wonderful, with bright red, green, and black bits in a white, creamy, chunky mixture. The skins add a "homestyle" effect. Take this potato salad along as a side dish on your own wine country outing. Find a tasting room with a table and chairs near the vines and enjoy this salad "in the vineyard."*

### Ingredients

2-1/2 pounds red potatoes, cut large dice  
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar  
1 TBS Dijon mustard  
1 tsp sugar  
1 tsp salt  
2 TBS Lodi olive oil  
3 green onions, sliced into 1/8-inch-thick rounds, then chopped once  
1/2 cup large pitted black olives, sliced into 2 or 3 rounds per olive  
1 large red bell pepper, cut brunoise  
1/4 cup sour cream  
1/4 cup mayonnaise



### *Preparing the Potatoes*

Wash the potatoes, gently wiping them with your hands. Do not scrub. If there are any eyes or dark dimples with tiny knots in them, cut them out with a paring knife. They will add bitterness and "seeds" to the otherwise creamy texture. There are usually 3 to 5 of these on a red potato. To cook the potatoes properly, you want them in approximately uniform cubes about 1/2 to 3/4 inch. Depending on the size of the potato, cut it either in half or in thirds lengthwise. Place each piece flat on the cutting board. Slice each piece lengthwise in half or in thirds. Slice across each piece every 1/2 to 3/4 inches.



Put all the potato pieces in a pot and cover with water a couple of inches above the potatoes. Let this sit in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours but no more than 24 hours. This will leech out excess starches that can make the pieces stick together and feel doughy. Drain the water thoroughly. I usually put the potatoes in a pasta insert, but you can just put them back in the pot. Fill the pot with fresh water again a couple of inches above the potatoes. Bring the water to a boil. Getting to a boil can take 10 to 20 minutes for cold potato pieces. Stir occasionally while heating up to keep the potato pieces from burning if you don't have a pasta insert. When the water starts bubbling, boil the potatoes for 25 to 30 minutes, stirring frequently. The pieces are cooked when you can easily cut one with a fork. The fork should easily slide through the piece, but the piece should split into two with no mashing. Drain the water, transfer to a mixing bowl, and allow them to cool.



### *Marinating the Potatoes*

Mix the vinegar, mustard, sugar, and salt and whisk in the oil. Drizzle the mix over the potatoes. Gently stir just a few times until all pieces are coated. Notice that some of the potatoes will begin to mash a little. Allow the mix to marinate in the refrigerator for 2 hours.



### *Making the Salad*

Add the onions, olives, bell pepper, mayonnaise, and sour cream to the potato mix. Gently stir just enough to coat all the potatoes. More of the potato cubes will become mashed, but you don't want the whole thing to become mush. Make sure at least half the cubes are somewhat intact to get a good texture. Refrigerate for 2 to 8 hours before serving.



***Mise en place for In the Vineyard Potato Salad***

### *The California Ingredient*

There's nothing like a road trip through, well, almost any part of California. One of the most amazing sensory experiences is driving past a field of green onions about to be harvested. California leads the nation in green onion production. Harvest is year-round but peaks in July through October. Most green onions are grown in the Central Coast and Temecula areas, both of which are also great wine regions. Green onions not only look appetizing, but they give the dish a fresher flavor than other types of onions. That's important in a cold salad like this.

### *Tips and Tricks*

The key to this dish is limiting the amount of vinegar. When you mix the marinade for the potatoes, it will seem like it's not enough. You'll be tempted to make more. Don't! If you add more than 1/4 cup of vinegar per 2-1/2 pounds of potatoes, the potatoes will be too sour. The mayonnaise and sour cream won't help cut the sourness, because the vinegar is inside the potatoes.

Another important tip is to not overcook or over-mash the potatoes. You need to have a balance of different size chunks and "cream" for an appealing texture.

Time and timing are important. Total preparation time is only about an hour, but the work is spread out over at 6 to 36 hours. You can make it and serve it in one day, if you are around the kitchen all day. However, you can also start two nights before the day of your luncheon. It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to clean and cut the potatoes. Then they need to sit in water for 2 to 24 hours, so you can do this step two nights before the day you want to serve it. Cooking and cooling take about 45 minutes. You need to be near the stove the entire time, so this is a good time to make your *mise en place*. The cooked, cooled potatoes need to sit with the marinade another 2 hours before the final mix, which only takes a couple of minutes. After mixing the salad, it's best if it sits in the refrigerator overnight, so you can cook, marinate, and mix the night before your luncheon.

With one or two tries, you can dial in the texture to your own personal taste. You can adjust the size of the potato pieces while cutting. Maybe make an extra cut to anything larger than 1/2 or 3/4 inch. You can reduce the number of chunks by additional stirring. Also, if the final salad is not creamy enough for you, add more mayonnaise and sour cream, 1 tablespoon each at a time each (it won't take much!). Also remember that I try to avoid salt and rely on the herbs and vegetables for flavor. People may like it better if you add an extra half teaspoon of salt during the final mix.