

flavor by mixing in fresh herbs or bold-flavored ingredients such as mustard or horseradish.

The liquids you choose can also boost the flavor of your gratin. I like a combination of chicken broth and a little heavy cream. Cream is a great flavor carrier, so even if you decide to cut back on the quantity (and use more broth to compensate), don't be tempted to leave it out altogether. For a little more interest, I sometimes spike the broth and cream with apple cider, dry sherry, or another dry wine.

The other secret to a successful fall gratin is using a little bit of potato. I find that gratins made with all squash or all sweet potato (or even a combination of root vegetables) lack structure without the potato, which holds together well when cooked and adds a bit of starch to the cooking liquid. Finally, don't forget the buttery crumb topping for the crunchy contrast.

### **Sweet Potato-Russet Potato Gratin** <sup>excellent</sup> **with Horseradish & a Dijon Crust**

*Serves eight as a side dish.*

#### FOR THE TOPPING:

- 1½ cups coarse fresh breadcrumbs (from an airy, crusty loaf like ciabatta)**
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

#### FOR THE GRATIN:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus ½ teaspoon for the dish**
- 1 cup thinly sliced shallots (from 6 to 7 large)**
- Kosher salt**
- ⅔ cup heavy cream**
- ⅔ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth**
- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 russet potato (12 ounces)**
- 1 sweet potato (12 ounces)**
- ⅓ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano**

**Make the topping:** Combine the breadcrumbs, melted butter, and a pinch of salt in a bowl. Mix in the mustard and then the Parmigiano and parsley.

**Prepare the gratin:** Heat the oven to 350°F. Rub

a shallow 2-quart gratin dish with ½ teaspoon of the butter. Melt the 2 tablespoons butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallots and a big pinch of salt; cook, stirring frequently, until softened, limp, and somewhat golden. Whisk together the cream, broth, and horseradish; add to the shallots. Season with salt and pepper, stir to combine, and take off the heat.

**Assemble and bake the gratin:** Peel the potato and sweet potato, cut each in half lengthwise, and slice each across into thin half moons. In a large bowl, combine the potato and sweet potato slices, 2 teaspoons salt, the Parmigiano, and the shallot cream. With a rubber spatula, mix gently but thoroughly and scrape into the prepared gratin dish, smoothing and pressing until evenly distributed. Cover with the breadcrumb topping.

Bake until the crust is deep golden brown, the juices around the edges have subsided, and the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, about 1 hour. Let rest for 15 to 20 minutes before serving.



*A kick of horseradish and mustard makes this gratin a perfect foil to baked ham or a rib roast.*

### Make-ahead tips

If you don't want to make the entire gratin all at once, you can do several things ahead. The aromatic ingredients can be chopped and cooked, and the liquids can be combined and held in the refrigerator for several hours. You can also make your breadcrumbs and grate your cheese a day ahead. If you want to assemble the whole dish a few hours ahead, just be sure that the cooked components are completely cooled to room temperature before mixing with the vegetables. Refrigerate the assembled gratin without the topping and remove it 45 minutes before baking to get it closer to room temperature. If you've held the gratin for several hours, sprinkle an extra tablespoon or two of chicken broth across the top. Just before popping it in the oven, make the crumb topping and put it on.