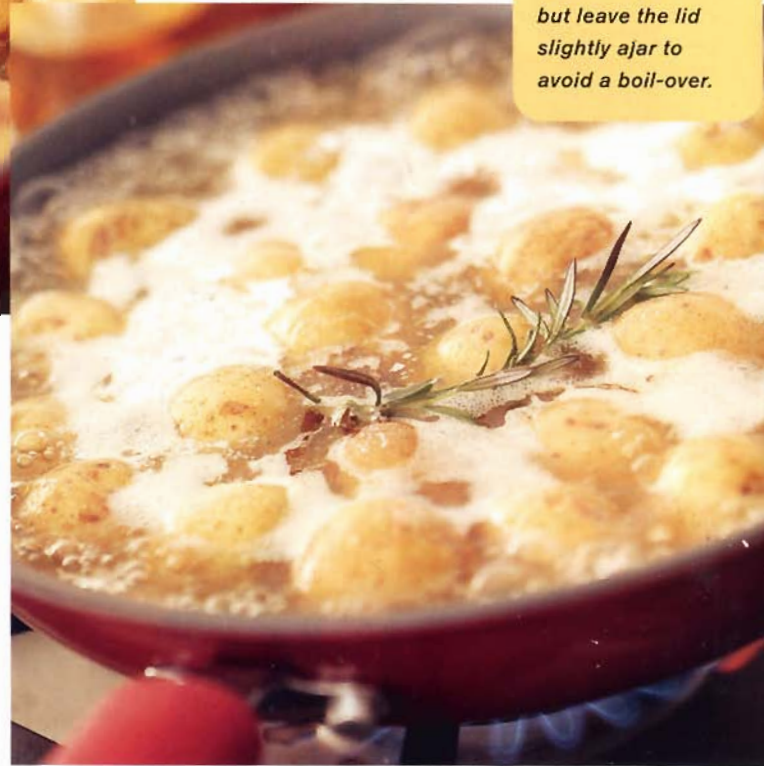




1 Put unpeeled baby potatoes in a nonstick skillet so they're almost but not quite touching—they'll need the wiggle room later when they're cracked.

2 Boil the potatoes in chicken broth to get them tender and to give them meaty flavor. Cover the pan but leave the lid slightly ajar to avoid a boil-over.



Try this easy method for creamy potatoes that taste like they cooked alongside a roast

BY JACQUES PÉPIN

Skillet “Roasted” Potatoes

If you love the way potatoes taste when they've cooked alongside a roast chicken or roast beef, then you'll love my recipe for potatoes fondantes. It produces the same creamy inside and sweet browned outside that you get from roasting potatoes in a pan with meat juices, but with a few advantages: You don't need to make a roast, there's virtually no preparation time, and the potatoes cook in only about half an hour.

Potatoes fondantes (which means “melting” is an old French recipe. The idea is to boil potatoes in broth until tender and then press on them just so they crack open. This lets the potatoes absorb the broth, giving them a rich flavor and a creamy, almost “melting” texture. They continue to cook, uncovered, until the liquid is evaporated

3 Press firmly on the potatoes to crack them; this helps them absorb more broth and ensures a creamy, moist interior. After cracking, continue boiling, but now uncovered.



4 After the broth has completely reduced, let the potatoes sizzle in the skillet until their bottoms are deliciously browned. Turn to brown the other side and then serve while hot.



excellent
Potatoes Fondantes

Serves four to six.

A nonstick skillet is crucial so the potatoes don't stick to the pan as the liquid evaporates.

- 2 pounds baby Yukon Gold or Red Bliss potatoes (20 to 25 potatoes, 1½ to 1¾ inches in diameter)
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- 2 cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (less if the broth is salty)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh chives
- Fleur de sel or other sea salt for serving (optional)

Trim the potatoes of any eyes or damaged areas and wash well in cold water. Arrange as many potatoes as will fit in one layer in a 10-inch nonstick skillet (there should be a little room to spare; save any extra potatoes for another use). Add the rosemary, broth, oil, butter, and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium, cover the pan but leave the lid a tad ajar, and boil until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, about 20 minutes. The liquid should still halfway surround the potatoes; if it doesn't, add more broth or water until it does.



Remove the pan from the heat and press on each potato with a ¼-cup measure just until it cracks open. Set the pan over medium-high heat and cook, uncovered, until all the liquid has evaporated and the potatoes have browned on one side, about 10 minutes. Gently turn the potatoes and brown the other side, another 4 to 5 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and let the potatoes rest for 5 minutes before transferring them to a serving platter. Sprinkle with the chives and serve immediately, passing the fleur de sel so diners can sprinkle some on if they want.

Jacques Pépin, a legendary chef, teacher, and cookbook author, has been eating potatoes fondantes since his boyhood in Lyons, France. ♦

and the potatoes have browned. Traditionally, the potatoes for this classic dish are peeled and trimmed into ovals, but my updated version—made with unpeeled, whole baby potatoes—is far less time-consuming.

The key to getting the creamy interior is to keep the potatoes surrounded by liquid. If the liquid doesn't come at least halfway up the potatoes after you've cracked them, add a little broth or water.

Of course, this dish is great with roasted beef, chicken, or lamb, but for me, potatoes fondantes makes a meal with a garlicky escarole salad. I like to add a sprinkling of fleur de sel (French sea salt; for sources, see p. 82) at the table to give a crunchy, salty bite to the creamy potatoes.



Flaky salt crystals, tasting of the sea. Fleur de sel is gathered from the Brittany coastline.