

Blanket of mashed potatoes



**It's cold, you're sick, tuck into
a warm shepherd's pie**

I don't want no chicken soup. When I'm sick, I'm sad, and I need more than some wimpy broth to fill the hole inside. If I am at home alone, all congested, achy and pathetic—as I was last week—all I want is a large helping of stick-to-my-ribs comfort food, or as comedian Patton Oswalt says: “I would like a failure pile in a sadness bowl.” He’s referring to KFC’s popular Famous Bowl, which combines several menu items—corn, fried chicken strips, mashed potatoes, gravy and cheese—into one glorious food item. “Just pile my food in a brown mound in a bowl,” he continues before asking, “And is there a way that the bowl can play Pink Floyd’s ‘Great Gig In the Sky’ while I eat alone in my apartment at two in the morning with all the lights off?”

Yes, that’s exactly where I was at last week. Oswalt is, of course, poking fun at America’s gluttonous consumerism, but for those of us who don’t mind our food touching on the plate, stirring together all the good stuff into one pile sounds very comforting. Besides, in all cultures there is a long history of extending leftover ingredients into extra meals by combining them with fillers (like potatoes), and in that tradition there’s one peasant-food staple that looks an awful lot like an English grandmother’s version of the Famous Bowl: shepherd’s pie.

Historically, a shepherd’s pie is made with lamb (if beef is used, it’s a cottage pie), but in practice it can be any leftover meat and vegetables combined with a gravy and covered with a layer of mashed potatoes and cheese. For my sick week, I wanted comfort, but not too much of a gut bomb, so I found a Whole30 recipe that kept the ingredients to a minimum. Then I tweaked it by leaving out thyme, replacing half the sweet potatoes with yukon golds, and using the leaner turkey instead of beef or lamb.

That’s the beauty of shepherd’s pie; the recipe is

endlessly adaptable. Just throw in whatever will bring you comfort.

Turkey shepherd's pie (adapted from *The Whole30* book)

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 4 medium yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 6 tablespoons ghee or clarified butter
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced (1 1/2 cups)
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 pounds ground turkey
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- salt, to taste

Directions: Place cubed sweet potatoes in one small pot, and cubed yukons in another, cover contents of each with water and boil until potatoes are fork tender. Drain both and mash together with ghee/clarified butter. Salt to taste and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350.

Put olive oil and onions in a large saucepan over medium-high heat and saute until onions are soft. Add carrots, celery and garlic and continue cooking until all veggies are soft and onions begin to caramelize around the edges. Add ground turkey and press/stir into vegetable mixture to incorporate. Add salt to taste and oregano and cook until browned.

Pour meat/vegetable mixture in a 3 quart casserole. Spread mashed potatoes in a layer across top, place dish on middle rack and bake for 30 minutes. Switch oven to broil and continue for another 5-10 minutes until top is lightly browned.

Serve in a pile in a bowl and eat until the sadness goes away. □

story and
photo by
Jason Cassidy
jasonc@
newsreview.com



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