

Ham, Potato, and Cheddar Cheese Gratin.txt

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Williams-Sonoma Complete Seasonal Cookbook, Oxmoor House, 2000

Serves 6-8

2 cups water  
1 ham steak (1½ lb), ¼ inch thick, trimmed of all fat (I use left over baked ham)  
3 ½ lb. baking potatoes, peeled and cut into thin slices  
3 cups milk  
¼ cup unsalted butter  
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
½ lb. extra-sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded  
½ lb. smoked Cheddar cheese, shredded  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a saucepan over high heat, bring the water to a boil. Add the ham and simmer for 30 seconds. Remove from the heat and drain well. Set aside.

Oil a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Distribute one-fourth of the potatoes evenly over the bottom of the prepared dish. Distribute one-third of the ham evenly over the potatoes. Top with half of the remaining potatoes and then all of the remaining ham. Top with all the remaining potatoes, layering the slices attractively.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Pour the milk into a saucepan placed over medium heat and warm until small bubbles appear at the edges of the pan. Remove from the heat.

In another saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes. (Do not brown.) Gradually stir in the hot milk and cook, stirring, until the mixture thickens, 4-5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the extra-sharp Cheddar cheese, smoked Cheddar cheese, mustard, and cayenne pepper. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Return the pan to low heat and stir just until the cheese melts, 1-2 minutes.

Pour the cheese sauce evenly over the potatoes and ham. Bake, uncovered, until the potatoes can be easily pierced with a skewer and the top is golden brown, about 1 hour.

To serve, spoon the gratin onto warmed individual plates and serve immediately.