

Red Potato Salad with Asparagus and Artichoke Hearts

I save this favorite summer salad for special occasions and the occasional informal meal at the monastery. If you omit the blue cheese, you can transform it into a fabulous vegan dish. To make a nice presentation, mound the potato salad in the center of a serving plate covered with a generous bed of fresh spinach or arugula. The flavor of this salad improves if it is allowed to "sit in itself" overnight. It can be prepared up to two days in advance and refrigerated; the flavor gets better the longer you wait. Toss the salad every few hours, or whenever you think of it, so the dressing has a chance to permeate all of the potatoes.

MAKES 10 TO 12 SERVINGS

- 3 pounds red potatoes (15 or 16 small or 8 or 9 large [3-inch] potatoes)
- 1 pound fresh asparagus, 1 inch trimmed off the base and, if the stalks are thicker than a pencil, peeled
- 4½ tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1½ teaspoons honey
- ¾ teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 14-ounce can whole artichoke hearts, drained, each heart cut vertically into eighths
- 3 ounces blue cheese (about ¾ cup), or more to taste, crumbled (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- Freshly milled black pepper
- Fresh arugula or spinach (optional)

1. Place the potatoes in a large pot with enough water to cover and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until they can be pierced with a fork, 15 to 20 minutes for small potatoes or 25 to 30 minutes for larger ones. Drain and let cool for a few minutes. Cut the potatoes into bite-size pieces and place in a large bowl.
2. Steam the asparagus until tender but not soggy, just until a knife can pierce the thick part of the stalk, 8 to 12 minutes. Immediately remove from the steam and transfer to a cutting board to cool. Slice into 1-inch lengths and add to the potatoes.
3. Whisk together the vinegar, mustard, honey, and salt in a small bowl. Drizzle in the olive oil, whisking until well blended and creamy. Add the artichokes and dressing to the potatoes and toss lightly.

4. Add the blue cheese (if using), dill, and pepper to taste. Toss lightly, taste, and adjust the seasoning with more salt, pepper, and/or blue cheese to taste. Refrigerate until serving time. Serve on a bed of arugula or spinach, if desired.

VARIATION

No-Frills Red Potato Salad

Omit the asparagus, artichoke hearts, and blue cheese. The dill can be omitted, too, though I prefer to use it. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ medium red onion, diced, and 1 large celery rib, diced.

“There is no such thing as the essence of dharma or the essence
of ultimate reality apart from here and now.”

— Eido Roshi