Main dishes / Italy

Gnocchi di Patate

Pillowy potato dumplings from the Veneto — baked starchy potatoes riced while still hot and worked with just enough flour to hold together, shaped into ridged cushions that cook in seconds and dissolve on the tongue.

Time 90 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1000 g Floury potatoes (Russet or King Edward), unpeeled
- ☐ 200 g Plain flour (all-purpose or 00), plus more for dusting
- ☐ 1 yolk Large egg yolk
- ☐ 6 g Fine sea salt
- ☐ 30 g Finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (optional enrichment)
- ☐ 60 g Unsalted butter and fresh sage leaves, for serving

Let's make it.

01 Preheat the oven to 200 C (400 F). Prick each potato several times with a fork and bake directly on the oven rack for 50–60 minutes until completely tender throughout and the skins have dried and crisped. This is not negotiable: baking the potatoes rather than boiling them keeps them dry. Boiled potatoes absorb water, and water-laden potato requires more flour to bind, making the gnocchi dense and tough. The goal is the driest, fluffiest potato interior possible.

02 Working as quickly as possible, halve the hot potatoes and scoop or press them through a potato ricer directly onto a large clean work surface or into a wide, shallow bowl — never a food processor, blender, or electric mixer, all of which develop the starch into glue. The potatoes must be riced while scorching hot: the heat drives off steam as they fall, drying them further. Spread the riced potato in a thin layer and let it steam-dry for 3–4 minutes. You should see wisps of steam rising from the pile. The more moisture that escapes now, the less flour you will need.

03 Make a well in the centre of the warm riced potato. Add the salt, egg yolk, and Parmigiano-Reggiano if using. Add about two-thirds of the flour. Using a bench scraper or your hands, incorporate everything with the lightest possible touch — a cutting and folding motion, never a kneading motion. Add flour in small increments from the remaining third only as needed for the dough to just barely hold together. Less flour is always better: the finished dough should look rough and just barely cohesive, not smooth and elastic. A smooth gnocchi dough has been overworked and will produce dense, chewy dumplings. Stop mixing the moment the dough holds together without crumbling.

04 Flour your work surface lightly. Divide the dough into 6–8 portions and roll each into a rope about 2 cm in diameter — use a light touch and no pressure. Cut each rope into 2 cm pieces. To shape: hold a fork in one hand, tines facing down. Press a gnocchi piece against the tines with your thumb and roll it down and off the fork in one smooth motion, creating the classic ridged shell. The ridge is not decorative — it dramatically increases the sauce-catching surface area. Alternatively, press lightly with your thumb to create a hollow. Place shaped gnocchi on a floured tray in a single layer without touching.

05 Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a rolling boil. Cook the gnocchi in batches — never crowd the pot, which drops the temperature and causes them to stick together. Lower them in gently. They will sink, then rise to the surface as they cook. Wait exactly 30 seconds after they rise before removing — that brief additional time sets the interior fully. Fish out with a spider or slotted spoon, letting them drain briefly. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a wide pan with the sage leaves until the butter begins to turn hazelnut-gold (beurre noisette). Toss the gnocchi in the brown butter for 30 seconds until coated and very lightly pan-seared. Serve immediately.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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