Potatoes Dauphinoise

For a 1 quart baking dish that serves 6-8 people:

Like many families, ours has a very set menu for Easter. If ever we decided to do something new, it better be an addition and not a replacement! This is one of those irreplaceable dishes. I have passed the torch to my daughter Christina and son-in-law Vince, who have improved it to legendary status, but it's essentially the same dish we have been making for decades. This is a scaled down version, considering that Easter for a crowd is just not possible this year. But if you are putting off your celebration until a crowd IS possible (as we are), just 3 times the recipe for a large baking dish.

1 Tbsp. butter for the dish
3 Russet, White Rose or Yukon Gold potatoes (a little over 1 lb, peeled)
1 cup heavy cream
1 large clove garlic, smashed
1 tsp. Herbs de Provence
4 oz. Danish Fontina (or any other good cheese for grating- traditionally it is Gruyere, but Cheddar works too), grated
salt and pepper

Preheat your oven to 300° Fahrenheit if your oven runs hot or 325 degrees if your oven runs cool. Grease the baking dish with the butter. Put the cream, garlic and Herbs de Provence in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Turn the heat off and let steep while you proceed with the potatoes. Slice the peeled potatoes about 1/8th inch thick. If you use a mandolin, just slice the potatoes and not your thumb like I just did.

Layer 1/3 of the potatoes in an overlapping pattern in the bottom of the baking dish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, 1/3 of the grated cheese and 1/3 of the cream (leave the garlic behind). Repeat this 2 more times, but with the the last layer, pour the cream on before the cheese, press the potatoes down to compress a bit and make to make sure the cream reaches the top layer. Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top and pop into the oven.

Now here is where it gets tricky. I can't tell you exactly how many minutes to cook this dish - there are just too many factors in play, like how big is your dish, how starchy are your potatoes, etc, etc. Just know that it will take at least an hour, but it could take 90 minutes. It should be golden brown on top and the potatoes should be tender when pierced with a knife. Let it sit for 10-15 minutes before you serve. Try not to fight over the last portion. Enjoy!

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