



Smoky Mediterranean Shepherd's Pie

Comfort dish that can be made ahead

Potatoes:

2-1/2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled; cut into 2-inch chunks
2 Tablespoons unsalted butter
4-6 Tablespoons heavy cream or milk
Sea salt; ground black pepper to taste

Meat Filling:

1 Tablespoon olive oil
1 pound ground lamb or desired ground meat
1/2 pound smoked mild sausage meat, sliced, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 cup chicken stock or broth
1/2 teaspoon red curry paste or harissa paste
1 Tablespoon ground cumin
1-1/2 teaspoons ground sumac or 1 tsp. lemon zest
1-1/2 teaspoons za'atar or 1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 (15 ounce) can crushed tomatoes
8 ounces sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
1 cup coarse chopped fresh kale
1/2 teaspoons fine sea salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
Olive oil spray as desired
Garnish: Chopped parsley and/or mint; drizzles of apple mint jelly

Prepare Make-Ahead Potatoes:

- Place potato chunks in a large pot of salted cold water. Bring to a boil over medium high heat; cook until potatoes are tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. Drain water from potatoes; return to pot over medium heat; cook 1 minute to dry potatoes.
- Using a food mill or masher, mash well. Stir in butter and 1/4 cup heavy cream; stir until fluffy; season with salt and black pepper to taste. Set aside to stay warm or refrigerate until ready to use it.

Before Baking: Center oven rack; preheat 375 degrees F oven; set aside a 2-quart ovenproof casserole or 12-inch round quiche baking dish.

Prepare Make-Ahead Meat Filling:

- Put a large skillet over medium heat, add 1 tablespoon of the oil and when it's hot, add the ground lamb and chopped sausage pieces. Cook, stirring to break up meat, cooking about 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Add onions and garlic; cook over medium low heat until the onions soften, about 10 minutes.
- Add the chicken broth mixed with curry paste, raise the heat to medium; use the spoon to scrape up any browned bits stuck to the skillet bottom. Stir in the spices and cook for a minute, then add the crushed tomatoes and bring to a gentle simmer. Scatter over the sweet potato pieces, cover the pan with its lid; cook over low heat until the sweet potatoes are fork-tender, about 20 minutes. Stir in kale; season with salt and black pepper to taste. (You can make the filling up to 2 days ahead and keep it tightly covered in the refrigerator.)

Place in Baking Dish:

- Spoon the filling into baking dish. If it's dry looking; add liquid in the pan to come up and around the edges of the meat. (We like it a little juicier rather than dry.)
- Spread the fluffy potatoes over the top. (I spoon them around the edges first.) Smooth potatoes over filling, making some swirl in the potato topping.

Baking the Pie: Lightly spray the potato top with olive oil; place the baking dish on a cookie sheet for easier handling and any small baking drips. Bake in preheated 375 F degrees for 30 to 40 minutes, until the filling bubbles and potatoes are browned here

and there. If you'd like to get them crusty brown, place under the broiler until lightly browned.

Garnish as dish with minced parsley and mint leaves and drizzles of apple mint jelly as desired. Serve warm. Yield: Serves 4 to 6.

Cook's Note: The original recipe used squash in place of sweet potatoes and suggested other kinds of meat that could be used. You could also use fresh spinach in place of kale.

About the Recipe: Shepherd's Pie is a rustic main dish that in early cookery books used leftover roasted meat with mashed potato crust on top. The term shepherd's pie is used more commonly when the meat is lamb. This recipe has a smoky flavored meat combination enhanced with sweet potatoes and kale. The creamy mashed potatoes cover the top of the pie. It's simply delicious!

Recipe Inspired by Dorie Greenspan: See p. 161 in "*Everyday Dorie*", - "*The Way I Cook*" for the original recipe".

Recipe Notes from Dorie:

To Make-Ahead: You can make the filling up to 2 days ahead and keep it refrigerated, covered. Alternatively, you can assemble the pie, freeze it for up to 2 months and bake it straight from the freezer. To do this, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and count on it taking about 1 hour to heat through. If the potatoes brown too much before the liquid starts to bubble, tent the pie loosely with foil. I like to get the potatoes going while I'm working on the filling. If you'd prefer, make the filling first. Either way, keep in mind that the potatoes will be easier to spread over the filling if they're warm.

Storing: You can keep leftover pie covered in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Reheat, covered, in a conventional or microwave oven.

Dorie's Suggestions: You can use turnips or green peas instead of the squash, or just skip the extra vegetable. You can also forgo the potatoes and the pie part of the dish entirely — the filling is so fragrant, tasty, and chunky that you might want it just the way it is. Pull out a bun and make a sloppy Joe or grab a wedge of cornbread and smother it with the juicy meat. If you plan ahead, you can make some rice or a pot of beans and use the filling as a spoon-over.

Substitutions to Try:

Sumac: If you don't have sumac, substitute freshly grated lemon zest.

Za'atar: A blend of dried thyme, oregano, and marjoram, sometimes mixed with sumac and roasted sesame seeds, If you don't have za'atar, you can substitute ground thyme, oregano or marjoram, or a mix of these herbs, add sesame seeds or not.

Harissa: A substitute is chile powder or for the paste, use hot sauce.