

Wearin' of the Green....
Eatin' of the Loaded Baked Potato Soup....
For St. Patrick's Day, Of Course

It's no surprise to anyone who has visited the Emerald Isle that you will find potatoes in abundance on every Irish plate. So, what better dish to make to celebrate St. Patrick's Day next Saturday than a steaming bowl of "loaded" – no pun intended – Baked Potato Soup, brimming with potatoes, Irish cheese, Irish bacon and Green onions! Since the healthy and tasty watercress grows abundant in the streams throughout Ireland, you may even want to top you Tater Soup with a little chopped watercress green as well!

St. Patrick's Day
Loaded Baked Potato Soup

4	Large Idaho Russet Baking Potatoes
½ Cup	Butter (1 stick)
½ Cup	All Purpose Flour
6 Cups	Milk
1 Tsp.	Kosher Salt
½ Tsp.	White Pepper
2 Cups	Irish White Cheddar or Sharp Cheddar Cheese, shredded (8 oz.)
8 Slices	Bacon, cooked and crumbled*
4	Green Onions, sliced
1 Cup	Sour Cream (8 oz.)
Garnish:	Additional shredded cheese or Blarney Cheese from Ireland, crumbled bacon, sour cream and sliced green onion Or chopped watercress

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Scrub potatoes; prick the potatoes several times with a fork.
Bake in a 400 degree oven for one hour or until tender when pierced with a fork.
(You can also microwave the potatoes: again prick the potatoes several times with a fork and cook 10-14 minutes on high, turning once, until tender when pierced with a fork.)
Cool potatoes. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out pulp in chunks. Set aside.
(Use shells for a potato skin recipe or discard.)

Melt butter in a large heavy saucepan or Dutch oven over low heat. Add flour, stirring until smooth. Cook one minute, stirring constantly, to produce a simple, light roux.

Gradually add milk; cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until thickened and bubbly, approximately 8-10 minutes.

Stir in potato chunks, salt, pepper, cheese, bacon, and chopped green onion. Cook until heated through, but do not boil. Stir in the sour cream. Again, cook until heated thoroughly, but do not boil.

Ladle into bowls and serve hot. Garnish with toppings of your choice. Yields: 10 Cups

Have a fabulous St. Patrick's Day!

Jungle Jim's Margie McErlane Potts