

A Lighter Latke

Reworking a Hanukkah classic proves a little oil can go a long way

BY KATIE WEBSTER

THE FACT IS, potato latkes—the crispy golden pancakes that are symbolic of the Jewish festival of lights—are all about the oil. After all, the point of Hanukkah is to celebrate the miraculous way that one day's worth of consecrated olive oil kept the Jerusalem temple lamp burning for eight days. Unfortunately, most latke recipes today rely on what seems like an eight-day supply of oil (or trans-fat-laden shortening products) to achieve the desired taste and crispiness.

In our effort to make a less heavy latke, we started with a recipe that called for a staggering 1 cup of Rokeach Nyafat (a kosher onion-flavored vegetable shortening used as a stand-in for chicken fat) for frying. We immediately substituted a nonhydrogenated fat (peanut oil, for its high smoke point) and reduced the amount to 3 tablespoons. Less oil led to two problems: the patties burned in the pan before they cooked through and the flavor was somewhat lacking. We turned to a time-tested method: starting the latkes on the stovetop and finishing them in the oven. To amp up the flavor and compensate for the lack of "shultz" (chicken fat), we added more onion and chopped shallot. The results were crispy and delicious.

Looking to boost nutrients and fiber, we substituted whole-wheat matzo crumbs for the

white ones used as a binder. Unfortunately the pronounced whole-wheat flavor was a distraction for some tasters, so we reduced the amount of matzo and relied on the natural potato starch to hold the latkes together. Fiber lost from the whole-wheat experiment was marvelously replaced by keeping the skins on the potatoes, which enhanced the flavor as well.

The results were pronounced miraculous by our tasters—perhaps not to the level of the everlasting oil but with 75% less fat and 61% fewer calories, a miracle just the same.

Oven-Crisped Potato Latkes

Healthy \times Weight Lower \downarrow Carbs

ACTIVE TIME: 50 MINUTES | **TOTAL:**

1 1/2 HOURS

Shredding the potatoes and onions in a food processor as opposed to a box grater makes this recipe faster.

- 1 1/2 pounds russet potatoes, scrubbed and shredded (about 2)
- 1 medium white onion, shredded
- 2 medium shallots, minced (about 1/4 cup)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 2 pieces whole-wheat matzo (6-by-6-inch), broken into pieces
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 3 tablespoons peanut oil or extra-virgin olive oil, divided

1. Toss shredded potato, onion, shallots and salt in a medium bowl. Transfer to a sieve set over a large bowl; let drain for about 15 minutes. Squeeze the potato mixture, a handful at a time, over the bowl to release excess moisture (don't oversqueeze—some moisture should remain). Transfer the squeezed potato to another large bowl. Carefully pour off the liquid, leaving a pasty white sediment—potato starch—in the bottom of the bowl. Add the starch to the potato mixture. Stir in eggs.

- 2.** Put matzo pieces in a sealable plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin into coarse crumbs. Sprinkle the crumbs and pepper over the potato mixture and toss to combine. Cover and refrigerate until the matzo is softened, 20 to 30 minutes.
- 3.** Preheat oven to 425°F. Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.
- 4.** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Stir the potato mixture. Cook 4 latkes per batch: place 1/4 cup potato mixture in a little of the oil and press with the back of the spatula to flatten into a 3 1/2-inch cake. Cook until crispy and golden, 1 1/2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer the latkes to the prepared baking sheet. Continue with 2 more batches, using 1 tablespoon oil per batch and reducing the heat as needed to prevent scorching. Transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake until heated through, about 10 minutes.

MAKES 12 LATKES.

PER LATKE: 108 CALORIES; 4 G FAT (1 G SAT, 2 G MONO); 18 MG CHOLESTEROL; 16 G CARBOHYDRATE; 3 G PROTEIN; 2 G FIBER; 204 MG SODIUM.

NUTRITION BONUS: Vitamin C (20% DAILY VALUE). **EW**



Serve Oven-Crisped Potato Latkes with Quick Apple sauce or Horseradish-Dill Cream (recipes at www.eatingwell.com).

Rx results:

Original Version

277 calories
17 grams total fat
4 grams saturated fat

EW Latke

108 calories
4 grams total fat
1 gram saturated fat