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Chips, Chips and More Chips

I am over the mediocrity!

Do any of you remember the early days of Monty Python's Flying Circus television shows? (Yes, the ones my parents wouldn't let me watch.) I always sneaked out and watched it anyway. There was this great skit in a typical English café where a couple was trying to order their Full Monty. The wife became agitated and screamed, "I don't like Spam!" because everything had Spam on it. The husband ordered something like Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam, Eggs, Chips and Spam!



[Watch the full scene here.](#)

Just like the character, I am a fan of Spam and occasionally have a craving, then I'm off it for a while. It's a bit of a sodium overload. So why did I mention this skit? Because it exemplifies the state of modern restaurant menus; it doesn't matter where you go, there are chips, chips or chips on every menu. For you non-English types, I am not talking about potato chips like Lays™. I mean French fries, pomme frites, papa frita or any other national version of the deep fried potato.

As a dining public, have we become desensitized by the amount of French fries we are served? From the restaurant perspective, they are cheap and filling, but come on—does any one restaurant really do them justice? Loading a plate up with a pile of mass-produced, overly seasoned fries, waffle cuts, steak fries and even poorly executed hand-cut fries has become too much. Is there another alternative, or can we just take a look in the mirror and figure out how to do French fries right!

It's time to dean the oil, find the right potato, and learn the art of "a la minute!" Some restaurant guys are going to say "forget about it," because they don't have the time or talent to make their own. So what about serving less and offering something else? Maybe someone might like a green salad, pickled beets, or even a couple more slices of heirloom tomatoes instead of a pile

Trib Food

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Check out this great magazine, [Four](#).



Eater is the source for people who care about dining and drinking in the nation's most important food cities, like Chicago. A favorite of industry pros and amateurs alike, Eater has an uncanny knack for finding out what's opening where, who's serving what, and how it's all going down. Find out [what's new](#) in Chicago.



The Cicerone Certification Program certifies and educates beer professionals in order to elevate the beer experience for

of empty calories and sodium with their artisan burger. Wouldn't it be great to get a plate of fries to share that are perfectly crisp and seasoned? In Belgium, they do that! If you haven't had frites and mayonnaise, you are missing something. It's not a lazy afterthought or the "you have to" addition to the plate!

The secret of good chips is the soaking, blanching and flash frying a la minute. The other two secrets are the right salt and the portion size!

The Potatoes

I prefer the Maris Piper Potato that is a little bit creamier. It also has a little less starch than the Russet Burbank, or what we like to call the baking potato.



The Soaking

I recommend peeling and then cutting them into 3/8" or 1/4" thickness. They are then soaked in water for at least 8 hours. This removes excess starch and some sugars, which tend to caramelize before the starch actually gets crispy. Don't throw the starch at the bottom of the bucket away. You will need that for the potato dumpling issue.

Drain the potatoes and pat dry or leave to air dry for about an hour or so.

Blanching

If you have access to peanut oil, use that or a vegetable oil modified for deep fat frying. If you are really in the know, use real beef lard or duck fat. Shhh! Don't tell anybody.

Heat your preferred oil to 325°F, grab a large handful, and drop in the oil for 3-4 minutes, stirring once and while. Remove, drain, and place on paper towels or in a basket to drain. Repeat one handful at a time. A large handful is the perfect portion.

Flash Frying and Salt

When you are ready with a beer in one hand and a burger at the ready, heat the same oil to 375°F and drop a handful of the blanched fries in the oil. Cook for 3-4 minutes until golden brown. Drain and shake off the excess oil. Place in a stainless steel bowl and season with popcorn salt or iodized salt and toss while they are hot.



If you want to add additional seasonings such as specialty salts, cheese, herbs and even malt vinegar, do it after this step and at the last minute, just before you serve them at the table.

It's simple and delicious! If you want something more, try lobster thermidor aux crevettes with a mornay sauce garnished with truffled pate, brandy and fried egg on top with Spam!

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

BEER

I think Belgian ale such as Duval or a lighter American pale ale such as Sierra Nevada.

Duvel



Sierra Nevada



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