

# Potato (Peel) Focaccia

By Lindsay-Jean Hard



Potato peels can be a challenging scrap to find another use for, but it turns out there is a pretty genius way to use up heaps of potato peels. Thanks to long-time Food52er AntoniaJames, I learned that potato peels' true destiny is in bread. She first shared \*years\* ago that she cooks the peels in water and blitzes the peels with a hand blender, saving both the starchy cooking water and the blended potato peel mush for use in rustic artisanal breads.

I decided to apply AntoniaJames' trick to Alexandra Stafford's Overnight, Refrigerator Focaccia as my base recipe. Stafford's no-knead bread, and her recent cookbook, Bread Toast Crumbs, have taught me so much about bread baking, so I was thrilled when she recently shared a tweaked version of her base focaccia bread. With a heap of potato peels looking at me, it was meant to be.

And, so inspired by Potato (Peel) Focaccia, my brain immediately jumped to loaded baked potato skins, which is one of the few ways—besides, now, in bread!— potato skins get to shine. So I made a version of the focaccia loaded with cheddar cheese, green onion, and bacon bits, which is the perfect partner for a bowl of potato soup (which you just might have the potatoes on hand to make).

For the bacon bits, I used the shelf-stable ones that aren't actually made with any bacon, because it makes the bread vegetarian-friendly! If you not into that idea, use well-cooked, crumbled bacon instead.

Any type of potato peels can be used in this recipe. Lightly-colored, thinner ones like Yukon Golds will virtually disappear, darker-colored ones like russets will freckle the dough. And it isn't necessary to hit the 4-ounce mark either, if you're only peeling 4 potatoes, use those peels! I like to put the peels in one pot and the potatoes in another and cook them at the same time, if you do that, too, you can use the potato-cooking water as well, in Step 3.

Recipe adapted from Alexandra Stafford's from [Overnight, Refrigerator Focaccia](#).

Makes 2 rounds of focaccia

- 1 cup (4 to 5 ounces) lightly packed potato peels (see headnote for more)
- 4 cups (17 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt 2 teaspoons
- instant yeast
- 6 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons butter, softened, for greasing
- Flaky salt for sprinkling
- *Loaded Baked Potato variation*
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons (3/4 ounce) bacon bits (see headnote for more)
- 1/2 cup (3 ounces) packed grated cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Place the potato peels in a small saucepan with 1 1/2 cups water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to maintain a simmer over medium heat. Cover and cook until the peels are very tender, 20 to 30 minutes. Allow to cool slightly.
2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and yeast. (If making the Loaded Baked Potato version, add the sliced green onions, shredded cheese, and bacon bits, and stir to mix.) Set aside.
3. Transfer the peels and remaining cooking water to 2-cup measuring cup (or larger), purée using an immersion blender, and then add more water to reach the 2-cup mark (if you do this before blending you risk making a mess). Alternatively, the peels and cooking water can be transferred to a blender instead. This potato peel water mixture needs to be in the 95° to 115° F range for happy yeast, so I blend when the mixture is still warm, then add cold water, check the temperature, and if it's still too warm, wait for it too cool off. If you don't have a thermometer, fear not, just check the temperature by putting a few drops on the inside of your wrist, it should feel warm, but not hot.
4. Pour the potato peel water mixture into the dry ingredients, and, using a rubber spatula, mix until the liquid is absorbed and the ingredients form a sticky cohesive mass of dough. Pour 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in the bottom of a large container with a lid (or use the same bowl that you used to mix!), transfer the dough to the container, turn to coat in oil, then cover and refrigerate for 24 hours. (Okay, or 18 hours if that works better for your schedule. Okay, okay, \*at least\* 12 hours, but that's the minimum, and really, 24 hours is best. Patience is a virtue and all that.)

5. Grease two 8- or 9-inch pie plates (or something similar) with 1 teaspoon butter each, then pour a tablespoon of oil into the center of each pan. Deflate the dough and separate it into two equal pieces (Alexandra Stafford does this with two forks and it works really well). Place one piece into each of the prepared pans. Roll the dough balls in the oil to coat them all over, and let the dough balls rest for 2 to 4 hours (depending on the temperature of your kitchen), until they have poofed up and filled the pans.
6. Once the dough balls look like they've had enough rise time (or close to it), heat your oven to 425° F. Once your oven is at temp, drizzle the remaining olive oil on them (1 tablespoon on each), stipple the dough with your fingertips to create deep dimples, sprinkle with flaky salt, and then put them directly into the oven. Bake for 25 minutes, or until golden brown all over.
7. Remove from pans, transfer to a cooling rack, and wait patiently. (Or rip into it while it's warm, I won't tell.)