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These Make-Ahead Latkes Are the Secret to a Stress-Free Hanukkah

It's a game-changing recipe with perfectly crispy results.

By

[Deborah Koenig](#)

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- With this make-ahead method, you can do the messy frying of latkes ahead of time, then easily finish them in the oven when you're ready to serve.
- You can hold the par-fried latkes in the fridge for up to 2 days or in the freezer for longer, then bake straight from chilled or frozen until perfectly crispy.
- This recipe easily scales up, making it great for Hanukkah parties and big family gatherings.

Every Jewish family has a latke person—the cook who knows how to achieve latkes with maximum crunch, meltingly soft centers, and the ideal balance of potato-onion-salt flavor. When I was growing up, my dad manned the skillet, but he ceded the spatula years ago. Now, among my

three brothers, their spouses, and our kids, the latke person is me.

To be honest, though, I don't enjoy frying food. It's messy, and the smell seems to linger for days. When I devised this make-ahead latke method about 15 years ago, I knew I had a game-changer. With a single stint behind the stove, I can make enough par-cooked latkes to bring to my extended mishpacha's Hanukkah party, plus a few extras to last as weeknight sides during the holiday's eight days.

Reheated in the oven, straight from the fridge or freezer, they taste like I just pulled them from the bubbling oil.



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For Superior Crunch, Soak the Potatoes—Then Squeeze Like Mad

Potatoes have two components that can keep your latkes from achieving crispy bliss: starch and water. A brief soak in ice water after shredding by hand or in the [food processor](#) draws out some of that excess starch.

Of course, now you have super-wet potatoes. To remedy that, roll the shreds inside a kitchen towel and wring them out thoroughly. You'll be left with a mound of fluffy spud shreds, which will begin to crisp up as soon as they hit the hot oil.

Get Your Hands Dirty

Jacques Pepin says your [hands are the most useful tool](#) in your kitchen, and that's definitely true when it comes to mixing latkes. There's no better way to make sure you've fully incorporated the other ingredients into the shredded potato and onion. Wash your hands first, obviously, then rake your fingers through the bowl, stir, and repeat until the contents look uniform.



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The Make-Ahead Trick: Par-Fry Your Latkes

If you fry up your latkes fully to serve hours or days later, the crispy bits will burn when you reheat them in the oven. But fry them only enough to turn them a pretty pale golden hue, and when you're ready to serve, just 15 to 20 minutes in a hot oven will produce fully-cooked, irresistibly crunchy latkes. They'll all be ready at once, and you won't be stuck in front of a skillet of hot oil when you could be playing dreidel.

Tips for Storing and Reheating Latkes

It's hard to beat this method for convenience, but the way you store and reheat your latkes will make a big difference in how they turn out:

- **If you're eating them within a day or two, refrigerate:** After par-frying, let the latkes cool on paper towels, then put down a fresh layer of paper towels in a large airtight container. Add the latkes in a single layer, then more paper towels, then more latkes. (Think of it as building a lasagna made of paper goods and fried potatoes.) Once they're all layered up, into the fridge it goes.
- **To store for longer, freeze:** Let the latkes cool on paper towels. Line something sturdy and flat with wax paper—think sheet pans or, for a smaller freezer like mine, cutting boards—and lay out the latkes in a single layer. You can crowd them a bit, but do not overlap. Freeze, and once solid, transfer to a zip-top freezer bag.
- **To reheat:** The reheating method is the same for refrigerated or frozen latkes. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Set cooling racks inside rimmed sheet pans and arrange chilled or frozen latkes on top—again, it's fine to crowd them a bit, but do not overlap. Bake refrigerated latkes for 15 to 20 minutes, frozen ones for 20 to 25, flipping halfway through.



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Prep Time 30 mins

Cook Time 60 mins

Total Time 90 mins

Servings 8 to 10 servings

Yield 20 to 30 large or small latkes

The bulk of the time in this recipe happens up front as you prep and par-fry the latkes, then you'll just need 20 to 25 minutes to cook them off from refrigerated or frozen when you're ready to serve. Cooking for a Hanukkah party? This recipe doubles or triples well—if you own two large skillets, have them both going at once to save time.

- 3 pounds russet potatoes, peeled
- 1 large onion, halved
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 to 1 cup vegetable oil, for frying
- Applesauce and/or sour cream for serving, optional

1. Prep the potatoes and onion:

With the shredding disk of a food processor or the large holes of a box grater, shred the potatoes and onion. Transfer to a large bowl of ice water and soak for at least 10 minutes.

2. Assemble your set-up:

While the shreds are soaking, put a large skillet, cast iron if possible, on the stove and cover the bottom with oil—reserve some oil to add later as needed. Do not turn on the burner yet. Line two rimmed baking sheets with paper towels and place them nearby.

3. Squeeze the potatoes dry:

Use your hands or a slotted spoon to transfer the shredded potatoes and onions to a colander, then pour out the liquid and wipe the bowl dry.

Spread a clean kitchen towel on the counter and add about one-third of the shredded vegetables. Roll up the towel and squeeze over the sink to remove as much liquid as possible. Empty the contents of the towel back into the now-empty bowl and repeat with the remaining potatoes and onion.

4. Make the latke mixture:

Add the eggs, flour, salt, and baking powder to the bowl. Use clean hands to mix thoroughly.

5. Par-fry the latkes:

Set the burner under the skillet to medium-high and heat the oil. To test if the oil is ready, slip in a shred of potato—if it bubbles immediately, you're good to go.

Use two soup spoons to carefully drop in about 2 tablespoons of the potato mixture into the skillet at a time. Flatten lightly with the back of a spatula and add more latkes. Do not crowd the pan. Cook until the undersides are pale golden and they're firm enough to flip, 2 to 4 minutes. Fry the other side for 2 to 4 minutes more, then transfer to one of the paper towel-lined baking sheets.

Repeat frying with the remaining potato mixture, adding oil to the pan in between batches if the level looks too low and turning down the heat if the latkes are browning too quickly, especially around the edges.



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Simple Tip!

If you want to eat the latkes right away instead of saving them for later, fry on each side until deep golden brown, 6 to 10 minutes per side. Drain on paper towels and dig in.

6. Store the latkes to finish and serve later:

Allow the latkes to cool. To serve within 1 or 2 days: Layer on paper towels in an airtight container and refrigerate. For longer storage, freeze them: Arrange the cooled latkes in a single layer on wax paper-lined baking sheets and pop them in the freezer. Once frozen, transfer to a zip-top freezer bag.

7. Heat and serve the latkes:

When ready to serve, preheat the oven to 425°F. Place cooling racks inside rimmed baking sheets and lay out the latkes on them close together, but not overlapping. Do not defrost frozen latkes—bake them straight from the freezer.

Bake until the latkes are crunchy and deep golden brown around the edges, 18 to 24 minutes if refrigerated, 20 to 28 minutes if frozen, flipping halfway through. Serve with applesauce and sour cream, if desired.

Simple Tip!

Smaller latkes will cook faster, and larger ones will need more time. Keep an eye on your latkes in the oven and cook until they're your desired level of golden and crisp.



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