

mashes, beyond the basics

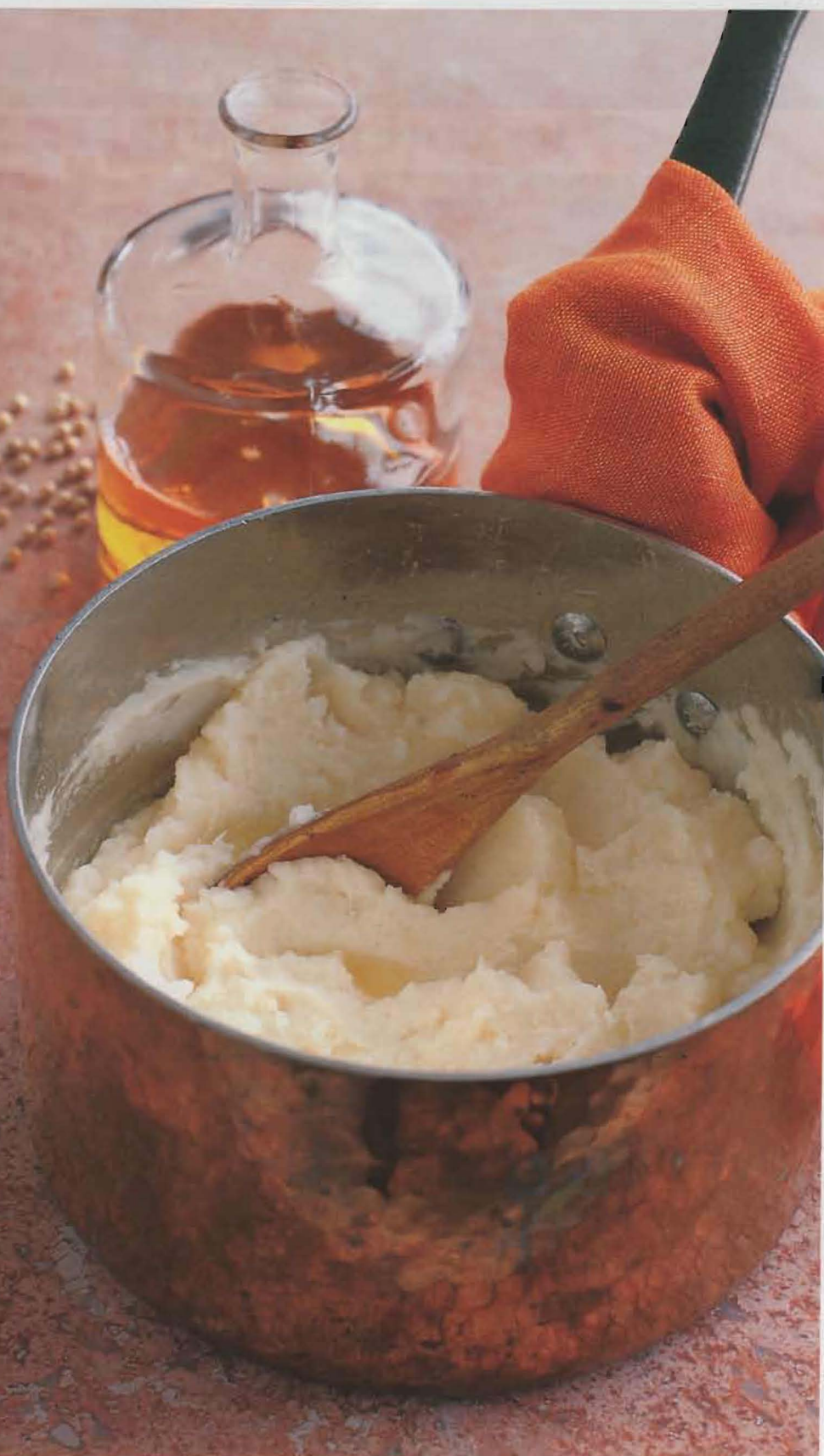
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THE CONFLICTING CLAIMS of comfort and style pervade modern life, from the upholstery of your favorite chair to the waistband of your jeans. On Thanksgiving, these tensions play out when deciding whether to cook the same old comfort foods that have been on the table since childhood. To serve them yet again feels a bit frumpy, but it would be sacrilege to jettison the side dishes everyone loves.

While mashed potatoes are probably the ultimate seasonal nostalgia food, it's possible to give them and other vegetable purées a new twist, with at least a few nods toward tradition. Knobby root vegetables and crisp apples were around in the Pilgrims' day—just not usually in the same recipe. A mélange of beets, tomatoes, and oranges graces the meal with the welcome splash of color that cranberries normally provide.

Walnuts are a classic stuffing ingredient; infusing their oil into mashed potatoes is a fresh variation on two themes. Tweaking time-honored dishes such as mashed sweet potatoes with ethnic ingredients like Thai red-curry paste reminds us of our melting-pot heritage. And what could be more American than that?

POTATO PLAY A classic mash gets the Cinderella treatment when it's bolstered by the luxurious addition of walnut oil.



POTATO PURÉE WITH WALNUT OIL

SERVES 6 TO 8

- 2 pounds russet potatoes
(3 or 4 potatoes), peeled and
cut into 2-inch pieces
- Coarse salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter,
room temperature
- 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon
walnut oil (see the Guide)
- Freshly ground white pepper,
to taste

1. Place potatoes in a large pot, and add enough cold water to cover by 2 inches. Add 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil, and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain, and pass hot potatoes through a ricer or a food mill into a large bowl. Cover to keep warm.

2. Combine milk, butter, and 1 tablespoon salt in a saucepan over medium heat, and cook until steaming but not bubbling. Add hot-milk mixture to potatoes, and stir until smooth. Stir in oil. Season with pepper. (Purée can be made up to 1 hour ahead; transfer to a heat-proof bowl, cover, and set over a pan of barely simmering water.)

3. Just before serving, beat potato mixture with a whisk until fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt to taste.



THE ITALIAN JOB Broccoli Romanesco, which looks like a cross between broccoli and a coral reef, is a staple in Italy, but it's often available at farmers' markets in the United States. This garlicky purée can also be made with regular broccoli or cauliflower.

BROCCOLI ROMANESCO AND PARMESAN PURÉE

SERVES 6 TO 8

You can substitute broccoli or cauliflower florets for the broccoli Romanesco.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds broccoli Romanesco
(2 to 3 heads; see the Guide),
cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces (7 cups)
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- Coarse salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons freshly
grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, plus
more for sprinkling
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add broccoli Romanesco and garlic,

and cook until brightly colored and beginning to turn golden brown, about 8 minutes. Remove and reserve a few pieces for garnish. Add water and 1 teaspoon salt to skillet. Cover, and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain any remaining liquid from skillet.

2. Purée half the broccoli Romanesco in a food processor, and then transfer to a large bowl. Puree remaining broccoli Romanesco. Bring milk and cream to a gentle simmer in a saucepan. Add milk-cream mixture to food processor with purée, and pulse to combine. Stir mixture into first batch of purée.

3. Stir in Parmigiano-Reggiano, and season with salt and pepper. Garnish with reserved broccoli Romanesco and more cheese. Serve immediately.

**ROASTED-BEET-AND-TOMATO
PURÉE WITH ORANGE**

SERVES 6 TO 8

- 1 pound plum tomatoes, quartered and seeded
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- Coarse salt
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2½ pounds trimmed medium red beets (about 4½ pounds with greens)
- 4 teaspoons fresh orange juice

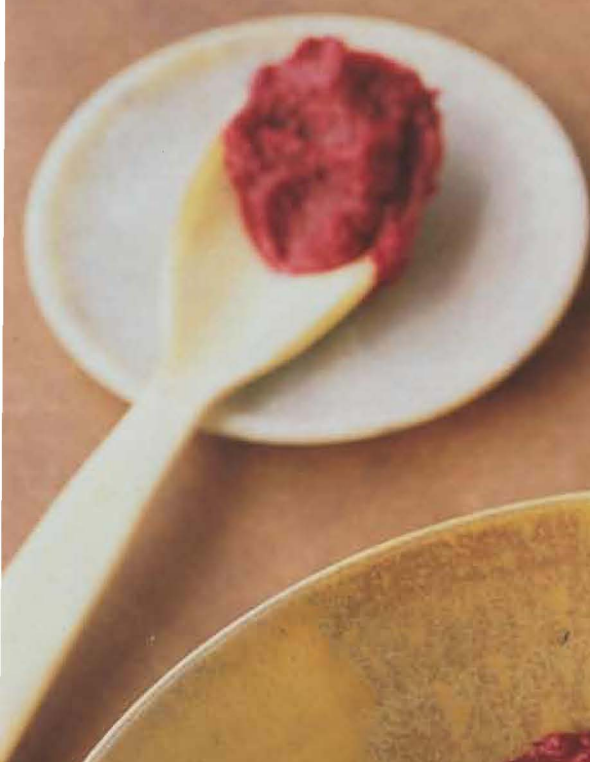
1. Preheat oven to 375°. Toss tomatoes with thyme, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 tablespoon oil on a rimmed baking sheet.

Spread in a single layer on half the sheet. Toss beets with 1 teaspoon salt and remaining 2 tablespoons oil. Wrap beets in parchment and then foil, and add to baking sheet. Roast until beets are tender, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool slightly. Peel beets, and coarsely chop.

2. Purée tomatoes and beets in a food processor in 2 batches, then combine. (Purée can be made up to 1 day ahead and refrigerated; reheat in a saucepan over low heat, stirring occasionally.)

3. Just before serving, stir in orange juice, and season with salt.

THE BEET GOES ON Orange juice and plum tomatoes brighten purply-red beets and balance out their earthy flavor.



MASHED RED-CURRY SWEET POTATOES

SERVES 6

- 6 medium sweet potatoes (about 4 pounds)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut milk
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 teaspoons Thai red-curry paste (see the Guide)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more for dishes
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Prick sweet potatoes all over with a fork. Bake on a baking sheet until soft, about 1 hour. Let cool slightly. Peel potatoes, transfer to a bowl, and mash with a potato masher.

2. Bring coconut milk and curry paste to a simmer in a saucepan. Cook for 5 minutes. Add potatoes along with 3 tablespoons maple syrup, 2 tablespoons butter, and the salt, and stir.

3. Preheat broiler. Butter six 1-cup gratin dishes or one 6-cup baking dish. Spoon mixture into dishes, and smooth tops. Drizzle with remaining maple syrup. Dot with remaining butter, cut into small pieces. Broil until tops are sizzling and browned, 3 to 4 minutes.

CELERIAC AND APPLE MASH

SERVES 6

- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups homemade or low-sodium store-bought chicken stock
- 1 cup water
- 1 pound celeriac (also called celery root), peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 pound Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored, and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium shallot, coarsely chopped
- 1 dried bay leaf
- Coarse salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce blue cheese (about 2 tablespoons), such as Buttermilk Blue, Danish blue, or Roquefort (see the Guide), plus more for crumbling



TANG, TEXTURE Coconut milk and curry paste update sweet potatoes, above. Celeriac, an ugly duckling, makes a beautiful mash, right, with blue cheese and apple.

1. Bring stock, water, celeriac, potatoes, apple, shallot, bay leaf, and 1 teaspoon salt to a boil in a large pot. Cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Strain, reserving liquid; discard bay leaf. Return celeriac, potatoes, apple, and shallot to pot, and add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup reserved cooking liquid. Coarsely mash with a potato masher.

2. Using a fork, mash together butter and blue cheese in a small bowl. Stir into celeriac mixture. Season with salt. (Mash can be made up to 1 hour ahead; transfer to a heatproof bowl, cover, and set over a pan of barely simmering water, stirring occasionally.)

3. Spoon into a warm serving bowl, and crumble blue cheese over top.

