

Country Ham Cottage Pie with Reese Water Chestnuts

INGREDIENTS

For the Ham Filling

- 4 tablespoons butter, *divided*
- 1/2 pound of country ham, diced
- 1 medium yellow onion, *diced*
- 1 cup celery, *diced*
- 3 cloves garlic, *minced*
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 1 (15 oz) bag of frozen mixed vegetables with carrot, corn, peas, green beans, and lima beans
- 2 cans [Reese sliced water chestnuts](#)

For the Potato Topping

- 2 1/2 pounds (3-4 large) russet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 cup half and half
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 egg yolks

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Ham Filling:

1. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the ham, onion, celery, salt, and pepper; cook until the onion has softened some, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Add the frozen vegetables and flour. Stir until well blended. Add the water chestnuts, stock, and bay leaves. Increase the heat to bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, and cook until thickened, 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat, taste, and season with more salt and pepper, if needed. I like to let the filling cool while making the potatoes so the bay leaves continue to season. Remember to remove and discard bay leaves before topping with potato mixture.

For the Potato Topping:

1. Meanwhile, cover the potatoes in a pot with cold water by 2 inches. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, and cook until tender (a fork goes in with ease), 15 to 20 minutes; drain and transfer to a bowl.
2. To the bowl, add milk and butter and mash until smooth and the butter has melted. Stir in the cheese, salt, and pepper until the cheese has melted; taste and season with more salt and pepper, if needed. Lastly, stir in the egg yolk.

To Assemble Shepherd's Pie:

1. Heat the oven to 400°F.
2. You can either keep the ham filling in an oven-safe skillet or transfer it to a baking dish. Spread the potato topping evenly over the top.
3. Place the baking dish on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any potential spillover and bake until bubbling, 20 to 25 minutes. Broil until nicely browned on top, 1 to 2 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.