

Shepherd's Pie

Serves 4 as a main dish

Lentil filling:

¼ cup olive or canola oil

1 8-oz package white mushrooms or 3-4 portabella mushrooms, including stems, chopped

1 large carrot, grated

3-4 cups cooked lentils (2 cans, drained with some water left, should do)

2 tsp. Balsamic vinegar or 3 Tbs. red wine (or to taste)

Mashed 'tater crust

1 lb red potatoes, skin on if you desire, cut into cubes

3 Tbs. butter or olive oil

Milk, cream, or vegetable stock as needed

3 cloves garlic, minced

salt and freshly-ground pepper to taste

You can do the mashed potato crust while you're preparing the lentil pie filling: Boil enough salted water to cover the potatoes. When boiling, add potatoes and cook until easily mashed with a fork. Drain and set aside in a mixing bowl. Heat the 2 Tbs. of butter or olive oil in a skillet and add garlic when hot. Turn the heat down and sautee the garlic until just golden brown. Remove from heat and toss into your potatoes. Mash the potatoes with the garlic and butter/oil mixture until creamy. Add milk, cream, or vegetable stock if desired to reach a smooth consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.

For the lentils, heat olive or canola oil in a large skillet, wok, or other pot. When hot, add mushrooms and sauté on med-high heat until they begin to brown and shrink. Add the carrot and sauté another minute. Add the lentils and vinegar or wine, then bring to a simmer for a few minutes. Mash lentils with a potato masher as they simmer and continue to cook until excess moisture has evaporated. (Note: if you are making this in a non-stick skillet that you don't want to harm with your potato masher, or if your masher is plastic and may melt, you can mash the lentils after you remove them from the heat). You should have something the consistency of refried beans. Remove from heat and add salt and pepper to taste.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spoon lentil filling into greased casserole dish or other baking dish (I like to use a few loaf pans). Add mashed potatoes over the top and add a few dollops of butter or spritzes of olive oil. Cover with foil – careful that it doesn't stick to the potatoes – and bake for 20 mins. (You can omit that last step if you're in a hurry and go straight to the browning). Uncover and bake another 15 minutes or until the potato crust browns. Allow to cool a bit before serving. Slice and serve, but be aware that it will probably crumble on the plate. I recommend letting your dinner guests serve themselves instead of pre-slicing for them.