

Gnocchi with Thyme Vinaigrette and Lemon Cashew Cream

In Italy, gnocchi doesn't require potatoes. Gnocchi can be made from regular pasta flour or cheese. In fact, pretty much anything that can be rolled into a lump and served like dumplings can be gnocchi. In the United States, however, gnocchi is usually assumed to be made mostly from potatoes. When it comes to potato gnocchi, there's a great debate between those who insist on adding eggs to the dough and those who insist that eggless gnocchi is the best. Being vegan, this is a problem easily solved. No eggs! There, that was easy, right?

Don't let anyone make you put eggs in your gnocchi! The downside is that eggless gnocchi can be a bit fussier than the egged version. But don't despair! I did a bunch of research, and I have a solid recipe here that will minimize, if not eliminate, any problems. These tips will be detailed in the recipe to follow.



Gnocchi with Thyme Vinaigrette and Lemon Cashew Cream

Makes 2 to 3 servings

step 1 Preheat the oven to 400°F. Stab your potatoes with a fork and wrap them in foil. Bake in a small dish for about 60 minutes, or until tender all the way through. Baked potatoes will be drier than boiled, so even though it takes longer, it makes for better gnocchi.

step 2 Put a large pot of salty water on to boil. It's important that you salt the water and not the dough; this will help keep the gnocchi firm. Salt is hygroscopic, meaning it absorbs water—salt in the dough would make your gnocchi a little mushy.

step 3 While the potatoes are baking and the water is heating up, build your workstation. You'll need the following: 1 knife (a paring knife is ideal), a fork or a gnocchi board, a large plate lightly dusted with flour (for shaping the gnocchi), and a large, flat surface for rolling out your pasta. A potato ricer (or a food mill) is ideal for ricing the potatoes, but a box grater or even just a fork will suffice. (For those who have never used a potato ricer, it's a common kitchen tool that pushes whole, cooked potatoes through a grate to make perfectly lumpless mashed potatoes [see the photos]).

step 5 Make the thyme vinaigrette by stripping the thyme leaves off of their stems into a mortar. Add a pinch or two of salt and grind with a pestle until a rough paste is formed. Add oil and vinegar and mix

Pasta

Gnocchi

2 russet potatoes (about 1½ pounds)

1 scant cup bread flour (I call for bread flour because of the high-gluten content. This will help the pasta set up while it's cooking a little better than regular flour would)

(No salt!)

Thyme Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons fresh thyme, leaves only

1 to 2 pinches salt, to taste

¼ cup olive oil

1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

Lemon Cashew Cream

1 cup water

1¼ cups roasted, salted cashews (or raw cashews)

Zest of 1 lemon

½ to 1 teaspoon lemon juice

again. Don't worry if it's emulsified; it just needs to be mixed. Taste and adjust salt or vinegar as needed. Set aside.



step 8 To make the lemon cashew cream sauce, mix the water, roasted cashews, lemon zest, and lemon juice in a blender and blend on high until thick and smooth. Adjust seasoning if needed (this should taste slightly sweet and not as salty as the vinaigrette). Set aside.

Making the Gnocchi:

step 1 As soon as the potatoes come out of the oven, remove the foil and then peel them.

The photo shows me using a vegetable peeler, but I quickly switched to scraping the skin off with the back of a knife—much easier!

step 2 You want to rice the potatoes as soon as they come out of the oven. The hotter the potato, the more steam comes off when you rice it, which reduces the moisture content of the gnocchi. The drier the gnocchi, the less



Vegan Yum Yum

flour you'll need, which leads to the lightest, fluffiest, most delicious gnocchi. Use a kitchen towel to hold the potato, unless you feel like burning your fingers!

step 3 Now let the potatoes cool/dry for 10 to 15 minutes. During this time, double check that you have everything in place you'll need for shaping, cooking, dressing, and plating the gnocchi. Once they're shaped, you want to be able to cook them and serve them as quickly as possible (unless you'll be freezing the cooked gnocchi for later).

step 4 Gather your cooled potatoes into a flat disc and sprinkle about half of the flour over them.

step 5 Work the dough with your hands, adding more flour if needed. You probably won't need the whole cup of flour. I had about three tablespoons left over. If in doubt, use less as opposed to more.

step 6 Work your dough until just combined. Do not overwork it! It should be soft, not sticky or crumbly. You're not even going to really knead it; just mix it together. You must shape the dough immediately.

step 7 My favorite part! Roll some of the dough out into a long snake, about as



Pasta

thick as your thumb. Cut the snake into little “pillows” and dust them with flour. To shape, simply roll one of the pillows down a ridged gnocchi board (or the tines of a fork). The gnocchi should curl around your thumb. One side will be ridged, and the other side will have an indent in it. This helps to catch the sauce.



step 8 Place the shaped gnocchi on a plate that has been dusted with flour. At this point you should cook the gnocchi immediately. I tried freezing the raw, shaped gnocchi once and it was a disaster! You must at least partially cook the gnocchi at this point or all your hard work will be ruined.



Cooking and Serving the Gnocchi:

step 1 Gently place the gnocchi into the salted, boiling water. After a minute or two, the gnocchi will float to the surface. About 30 seconds after they begin floating, use a slotted spoon to remove them from the water, draining them well.

step 2 Place the cooked gnocchi into a large bowl that has half of the vinaigrette in the bottom. Toss the gnocchi to coat. Drizzle your dinner plates with the other half of the vinaigrette and some of the cream sauce. Pile the gnocchi on the plates and drizzle more cream sauce on top. Garnish with a fresh sprig of thyme and serve immediately.