

Donald's Pâté Chinois / Shepherd's Pie

In Canada, shepherd's pie contains beef; the folk story is that during the construction of the railroads, the Chinese cooks were asked to make Shepherd's Pie or Cottage Pie for the workers, and were instructed to make the dish using beef, creamed corn (for the sauce), and potatoes. The French Canadian workers liked the dish so much that they brought the recipe back home and called it Pâté Chinois (Chinese Pie, after the Chinese cooks who made it for them ...)

I add the ketchup, carrots and peas because I like carrots and peas a lot, and the ketchup in the beef layer is rather nice, or at least I think so.

Makes five, 6"x8"x2" dishes and ten, 4" diameter x 2" deep ramekins -- for freezing, of course

Equipment:

- Stove
- Large pot (at least 4 quarts)
- Large skillet or electric frypan
- Skillet for frying chicken breast
- Potato masher
- ovenproof casserole dishes equivalent to above. Microwave safe dishes help cut down on the warming up and browning part.

Topping:

- 10 lbs potatoes, peeled
- 2 cups milk for mashed potatoes
- Large dollop of margarine
- 1 tsp of salt

Filling:

- 4 lbs ground beef
- 5 onions
- salt to taste
- ketchup to taste (about 1/2 cup to 1 cup)
- 6 x 14oz / 398ml cans cream corn -- refrigerate in advance (to help cool the pies)
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 4 medium carrots

To make it:

- Peel and quarter potatoes, and rinse in cold water
- Cover with clean water, and bring to a boil
- Boil potatoes for 20 minutes
- This step will occur while the beef mixture is still frying: Immediately drain the potatoes
- Immediately add milk, margarine/butter and salt, and mash until smooth
- Cover and put aside

While the potatoes are boiling:

- Clean carrots, and slice into coins
- Cover in water, add salt, and bring to a boil
- Boil for 5-10 minutes
- Drain, and cool in a refrigerator

While the potatoes and carrots are boiling:

- Clean and chop onions

- Fry the beef and onions in a large skillet, such as an electric frypan
- Partway through, add the ketchup.
- Beef is cooked when the water fraction has evaporated (there will still be liquid grease left)

Building the dishes:

- Layer the beef and onion mix in the bottoms of all of the casserole dishes
- Cover with the cream corn
- Sprinkle the frozen peas on top
- Spread the carrot coins on top
 - Alternatively, the cream corn, peas and carrots can be mixed together in advance, and layered onto the beef
- Layer the still warm mashed potatoes on top

Freezing

Put the casseroles in bags and freeze. I find that freezing first helps "marry" the ingredients better for later when being cooked.

Cooking and serving

- Defrost fully -- if microwave safe dishes were used, using the microwave to defrost and preheat the dish helps
- bake at 350F for approximately 30 minutes if heated in microwave beforehand, or about 60 minutes if not
- Continue baking until potato layer begins to brown and a bit of sauce begins to bubble out the side
- If desired, broil for several minutes to brown the potato layer.