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## Traditional or innovative potato salad? You decide

BY DAVID HAMMOND June 29, 2012 11:12AM

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Warm and buttery with vinegar accents, the potato salad I ate at the Wurzberg Wine Festival was one of the best things I had eaten in a long time. It was perked with bacon, sprinkled with diced onion greens, spectacularly simple and satisfying.

My German dining companions were politely appalled when I told them that where I come from, the typical potato salad has diced potatoes, a hefty measure of mayo and is served cold.

Now, don't get me wrong. I've lived in Chicagoland my entire life, and I've had many different types of spud salad, but the chunky white and creamy variety is pretty much the default version at family gatherings. I like it, I really do. But after having that stupendous salad in Germany, I began rethinking the potato salad I've been eating for more than half-a-century.

And what better time to ponder potato salad than on the eve of the Fourth of July, perhaps our country's premier picnic and/or BBQ holiday?

So how do Chicago chefs make a better potato salad? Three Aces' Matt Troost adds "bacon, scallions, red onion, arugula and capers, adding, "If I'm feeling fancy at home, I'll add some anchovy and roasted fresh red chiles."

Anchovies and chiles sound like excellent additions.

Stephanie Samuels of Angel Food Bakery makes "a 'Mediterranean' style potato salad with red and yellow peppers, kalamata olives and feta, with a lemon olive oil vinaigrette."

I'd eat that!

At home, Hearty's Steve McDonagh adds "grilled asparagus or blanched green beans"; Cory Morris of Mercat La Planxa drops in chorizo, and Lockwood's Val Brenner does a baked potato salad loaded into the potato skin, saying, "I'm told, not asked, to bring it to every BBQ I'm invited to."

These are all worthy innovations. One might consider any of them improvements on the predictable traditional potato salad.

So what kind of potato salad are we having this July 4th?

The white and creamy kind, of course.

Because even though there clearly are excellent ways to make potato salad more interesting, there are traditions we must respect. And sometimes food tastes best simply because it's prepared the way we've always known it.

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