MASHED SWEET POTATOES

SERVES 4
PREP TIME: 5 minutes  TOTAL TIME: 50 minutes

This recipe can be easily doubled, with two provisions: Use a large Dutch oven and double the cooking time.

2 pounds sweet potatoes (3 medium), peeled, quartered lengthwise, and sliced
¼ inch thick
4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces
2 tablespoons heavy cream
1 teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon salt
Pinch pepper

Combine the sweet potatoes, butter, cream, sugar, salt, and pepper in a large saucepan. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes fall apart when poked with a fork, about 40 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and mash the potatoes with a potato masher until smooth.

VARIATIONS

MAPLE-ORANGE MASHED SWEET POTATOES
Stir 2 tablespoons maple syrup and ½ teaspoon grated orange zest into the mashed potatoes with the pepper.

GARLIC-SCENTED MASHED SWEET POTATOES WITH COCONUT MILK AND CILANTRO
Substitute ½ cup coconut milk for the butter and cream. Add ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes and 1 minced garlic clove to the saucepan with the sweet potatoes. Stir 1 tablespoon minced fresh cilantro into the mashed potatoes with the pepper.

To Make Ahead
The mashed sweet potatoes can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours. Reheat in a lidded pot with 2 tablespoons heavy cream or water over low heat, stirring often, until warmed through.

Testing: Potato Mashers

For home-style spuds in a hurry, we eschew fancy gadgets and turn to a traditional, hand-held potato masher. These come in two camps—wire-looped mashers with a zigzag presser or disk mashers with a perforated round plate. Although elbow grease is the main mashing factor, we found that without exception disk mashers were preferred for achieving a fast and even mash. Our favorite is the Profi Plus Masher ($15.99), whose comfortable grip, small holes, and oval-shaped mashing plate turned out mashed potatoes with a minimum of lumps and effort.

For the best flavor, braise sweet potatoes in butter and cream before mashing them.