

HASH BROWNS

The second part, or maybe the first of my recent potato quest (or now that I think about it, maybe the third or fourth). As I was researching hash browns and potato pancakes, I went back and forth as to which one I wanted to do. Of course, it wound up being both. I think part of the motivation for this part might just possibly be to recreate the “McDonald’s” hash browns out of some sort of misplaced nostalgia, but it also has given me at least a couple of crazy ideas for the future. Only time will tell

2021-02-01 (Monday): Left turn Clyde. My last attempt was tasty, but it fell apart. I went back to the drawing board to see what I was doing wrong and in the process added a few “enhancements”

2021-02-07 (Sunday): One more minor tweak... burger press!!! 100% necessary, well, no, BUT I have one and it makes forming the patties much easier! Also, taking out the juice press... it did NOTHING!

INGREDIENTS

Qty.	Unit	Item
4	~12 oz.	Russets
1	TSP	Kosher Salt
1	TSP	White Sugar
1	TSP	Sodium Free Beef Bouillon
AR	-----	Fresh Ground Black Pepper
1	TBSP	Masa
1	TBSP	Mashed Potato Flakes
AR	-----	Peanut Oil

Insert standard blurb about salt here

I came across one or two recipes that added sugar. At first I discounted this, but then checked out the ingredient list on McDonald’s website. Guess what? Dextrose. I was going to use corn syrup, but decided on white sugar for being “close enough”

No real preference on the beef bouillon, but it does need to be sodium free. If not, you’ll probably need to back off on the salt

No masa or mashed potato flakes? AP flour should work in a pinch

Don’t like peanut oil? Any high temp neutral oil should do

SPECIAL TOOLS

- Food processor with a grater attachment
- Salad spinner
- Counter top deep fryer

- Food Saver (or similar vacuum sealer)
- Vacuum seal bags or bag rolls
- Vacuum seal bag holder [i]
- Burger press [viii]
- Wax paper squares [viii]

PREPARATION

PART I

- 1) Check Sous Vide machine water and replace as required
- 2) Heat the Sous Vide machine to 195 deg. F [i]
- 3) Rinse and dry potatoes
- 4) For each potato
 - a. Fill your food processor bowl part way with cold water
 - b. Peel potato and cut into pieces that will fit inside your food processor feed tube
 - c. Grate the potato with the food processor. If the bowl fills up, transfer the potatoes and water to a glass bowl and add water as required to keep potatoes covered. Add more water to the food processor bowl and continue to grate the remaining portion of potato
- 5) Gently massage the potatoes in the glass bowl
- 6) Drain the water and refill
- 7) Repeat steps 5 and 6 until the water runs clear or 5 times, whichever is less
- 8) Spin potatoes in salad spinner a little at a time and spin out as much excess water as possible [iii]
- 9) Split the potatoes between (4) 1-qt vac seal bags
- 10) For each bag
 - a. Spread the potatoes as flat as possible in the bag. Squeeze out extra air and press down on the potatoes
 - b. Pull the vacuum and make the first seal. Continue to press on the potatoes as the vacuum is pulled. Watch carefully and stop the machine before any liquid gets pulled into the machine
 - c. Hit the seal button again after 1 minute
 - d. Pull the bag and dry out any liquid from the top of the bag
 - e. Make a seal just above the first one
 - f. Hit the seal button again after 1 minute
- 11) Place potatoes in Sous Vide machine [ix]
- 12) Once sous vide temperature has recovered, set timer for 90 minutes
- 13) At the end of 90 minutes, pull the potatoes from the Sous Vide machine [iv]
- 14) Spread the potatoes over a half sheet
- 15) Sprinkle 1 TSP beef bouillon evenly over potatoes
- 16) Sprinkle 1 TSP white sugar evenly over potatoes
- 17) Sprinkle fresh ground pepper evenly over potatoes
- 18) Sprinkle 1 TSP kosher salt evenly over potatoes
- 19) Sprinkle 1 TBSP masa evenly over potatoes
- 20) Sprinkle 1 TBSP mashed potato flakes evenly over potatoes

- 21) Move the potatoes back to a glass bowl and gently fold everything together
- 22) Taste for seasoning and adjust as desired
- 23) Split the potatoes into 8 equal portions
- 24) Set the burger press for its maximum patty height
- 25) Place a wax paper square on the bottom of the burger press, followed by one portion of potatoes
- 26) Spread the potatoes out evenly, but not quite to the edge of the press
- 27) Place a second wax paper square on top of the potatoes and close the press. Adjust the press to the smallest height possible with the potatoes inside
- 28) Open the press and rotate the potatoes 180 deg. and press again firmly
- 29) Place the potatoes on a ¼ sheet cooling rack in a ¼ sheet pan
- 30) Now that the press is adjusted, do the following for the remaining portions
 - a. Place a wax paper square on the bottom of the burger press, followed by one portion of potatoes
 - b. Spread the potatoes out evenly, but not quite to the edge of the press
 - c. Place a second wax paper square on top of the potatoes and close the press firmly
 - d. Open the press and rotate the potatoes 180 deg. and press again firmly
 - e. Place the potatoes on a ¼ sheet cooling rack in a ¼ sheet pan
- 31) Place the pans in freezer until the hash browns are completely frozen [vi]
- 32) Vac seal the frozen hash browns and keep in freezer until needed

PART II

- 1) Fill deep fryer with oil and heat to 356 deg. F
- 2) Set oven to “warm”
- 3) Run the vac seal bags under cold water. This makes it easier to separate the hash browns from each other and the wax paper squares from the frozen hash browns
- 4) Fry the hash browns two at a time for 3 minutes 30 seconds
- 5) Flip the hash browns with tongs and fry for an additional 2 minutes
- 6) Repeat step 5 until the hash browns are a nice golden brown on both sides
- 7) Drain the hash browns over the deep fryer for 30 seconds
- 8) Place on a cooling rack in a sheet pan
- 9) Gently, but thoroughly, pat the excess oil from the hash browns with paper towels
- 10) Cover with a second sheet pan and place in oven to keep warm
- 11) Plate
- 12) ENJOY!!!

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Well, I had high hopes for the salad spinner. It got out some water, but left a bunch in. A good starting point, but I think I am going to pull out the big guns (i.e. my juice press!). I also need to let the hash browns freeze completely before vac sealing; I was too impatient and they got squished!

Next Day: I formed the last Sous Vide bag I had left in the fridge. This time I fluffed them prior to forming and let them freeze solid before vac sealing. This definitely worked much better and I am anxious to fry 'em up.

The Day After Next: Tasty!, but they fell apart in the deep fryer. I know I can use them for something, but it is not what I was looking for here. Back to the drawing board!

And another thing... I am getting some discoloration with the Sous Vide cooking. This last time was interesting, however, in that one of the packs did not show discoloration. I THINK this one was the one I pressed one the pots as I was vacuum sealing. I need to pay extra attention to this next time

20210213 (Saturday): Well, these are TASTY!, but a little greasy if you don't pat the excess oil from the hash browns with paper towels. I think my next iteration will be in the oven or, if I get around to setting it up, my smart toaster / convection oven

NOTES

- i. It takes my machine about 1 hour, 15 minutes to get to 200 deg. F
- ii. Vac seal bag holders are VERY handy, especially if you are pouring in liquid
- iii. Don't have a salad spinner? Spread the potatoes on a clean, non-fuzzy towel, gather the corners of the towel together, then wring and squeeze to get out as much excess water as possible
- iv. You have some leeway here, so if you can't get to them right away after the timer goes off, its fine!
- v. I'm going with rounds for various reasons, but if you prefer the classic oblong shape, go for it!
- vi. This may take a few hours
- vii. A small bowl or ramekin may help
- viii. 100% necessary? No, but it sure makes forming the patties easier!
- ix. They bags may float as they cook, so make sure you weigh the bags down or secure them by some other method

PICTURES













