

## ROOT VEGETABLE LATKES

LIZ: Hanukkah is the time of year I feel the most Jewish. While the rest of New York is feverishly buying gifts and planning big family meals, I'm quietly grating potatoes by the light of the menorah. In contrast to so many other Jewish holidays, Hanukkah celebrations are relaxed and loose. It feels like all I need to do is fry up some latkes, and I'm in the perfect holiday spirit.

The latke as we know it took quite a culinary journey, beginning centuries ago in Italy as a cheese fritter fried in olive oil, then moving northeast, where it morphed into a buckwheat and rye pancake, and then a turnip fritter fried in schmaltz. Finally, in the mid-nineteenth century, the potato took over. This latke includes root vegetables alongside the classic potatoes, which lend extra color and flavor to the mix. Note that if you prefer a pure potato latke, simply substitute 6 small russet potatoes (about 3 pounds) for the veggies in this recipe. The root vegetable version is a bit lighter and more fragile than the purely potato version, so take care when forming into latkes for frying.

MAKES 18 TO 22 LATKES

4 russet potatoes (about 2 pounds), peeled  
1 medium parsnip, peeled  
1 medium turnip, peeled  
1 small onion  
4 scallions, finely chopped  
3 large eggs, lightly beaten  
1 tablespoon kosher salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1/3 cup bread crumbs or matzo meal  
Schmaltz or peanut, canola, or grapeseed oil, for frying  
Apple-Pear Sauce for serving (optional)  
Sour cream, storebought or homemade for serving (optional)

1. Shred the potatoes, parsnip, turnip, and onion on the large holes of a box grater or in a food processor using the shredder plate. Place the grated vegetables in a large bowl and add cold water to cover. Let sit for about 5 minutes.
2. Drain the vegetables in a colander and squeeze out as much liquid as possible from the shreds into a bowl. It's helpful to take cheesecloth or a clean thin kitchen towel, drape in an empty bowl, then pour in the shredded vegetables. Wrap the cheesecloth or towel around the vegetables and squeeze tightly in the bowl. Repeat until as much liquid as possible has been removed. White potato starch will collect at the bottom of the bowl. Carefully drain off the water, leaving the potato starch. Set aside.
3. Place the drained vegetable shreds in a large bowl. Add the scallions, eggs, salt, pepper, flour, bread crumbs, and the reserved potato starch. Mix well, preferably using your hands.
4. In a 9-inch nonstick or cast-iron skillet, heat a layer of schmaltz or oil, about 1/8 inch deep, over medium heat. Form the latke batter into thin patties, using about 2 tablespoons for each. As you form the patties, squeeze out and discard any excess liquid. Carefully slip the patties, about 4 at a time, into the pan and fry for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, or until golden brown and crisp. Take care to flip them only once to avoid excess oil absorption. If the pan begins to smoke at all, add more schmaltz or oil and let it heat up again before frying another batch of latkes.
5. Remove the latkes from the pan and place on a baking sheet lined with paper towels to drain the excess fat. Latkes are best and crispiest when served right away. If serving later, transfer to a separate

casserole dish or baking sheet and place in the oven at 200°F to keep warm until serving. Serve hot, topped with Apple-Pear Sauce and/or sour cream.