

Twice-Baked Potatoes with Labaneh and Za'atar



I can't believe this is real but there was a time in my life when I did not like labaneh and za'atar – together or apart. I did not like it. I'm so ashamed to admit this about myself because they are such an integral part of Israeli cuisine and I am 100% on board with all things Israeli cuisine. I distinctly remember once, in 2008, when I was living abroad for the year studying at the Pardes Institute of Judaic Studies, a trip I went on for Shabbat. I cannot remember exactly where I was but I know it was a small Arab village that was known for its labaneh and I was determined to give labaneh another try. Folks had raved about this tiny village and their labaneh and by golly, I was going to like it! In case you don't, labaneh is technically a yogurt only it's been strained to filter or remove the whey. It's a classic Middle Eastern dairy spread that tastes like if Greek yogurt and sour cream had a delicious, creamy baby. And while I did try that tiny village's labaneh, I still didn't like it at the time.

I am happy to report, however, that times and tastes have changed in the last 11 years since I tried that labaneh. I don't know what happened. Maybe I've actually matured in taste palette as well as in life!? Maybe it was all that labaneh I've seen on some of my most favorite Israeli cuisine chefs (shalom, Adeena Sussman!). Whatever it is, my new Shabbat morning breakfast is labaneh, roasted cherry tomatoes, Israeli salad, and pita chips. I now have this little breakfast every Shabbat morning; I love labaneh that much.



Therefore, when the folks at Tnuva asked me if I would be interested in partnering on a few recipe posts I was more than happy to be ALL in!

Fun Fact: Since 1926 (almost 100 years!) Tnuva has been the world's leading premium kosher cheese provider. They've expanded to include many other products like puff pastry and harissa, all made in Israel! GIMME ALL THE HARISSA AND PUFF PASTRY!

My first recipe in this dream partnership is a Twice-Baked Potato with my old friends, labaneh and za'atar—a flavor match made in heaven! I don't want to trigger anyone into an anxiety spiral but the Jewish holidays this year just destroyed me. There was so much cooking and grocery shopping and meat consumption that I decided that for Thanksgiving this year, we would host a vegetarian potluck Friendsgiving and I will FOR SURE be making these delicious twice-baked potato friends for that dinner. Twice-baked potatoes are so creamy, filled with flavor and are the perfect canvas for Tnuva's rich and delicious 5% labaneh. The creaminess of the labaneh is an easy and scrumptious way to create the smoothness needed for pipping back into the potato skin boat. If you don't have a star piping tip or piping bags, feel free to just scoop the labaneh + potato mixture back into the potato skins. The piping is just to up the fancy factor.





Twice Baked Potatoes with Labaneh and Za'atar

Ingredients:

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp olive oil

4 6-ounce Russet potatoes, scrubbed

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Tvuna Labaneh

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup half and half

3 tbsp unsalted butter

2 tbsp finely chopped chives

3 tbsp finely chopped dill

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp za'atar

1.5 tbsp kosher salt

1 tbsp garlic powder

Directions:

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 375°F.

Rub oil over potatoes. Pierce in several spots with a fork. Place directly on oven rack; bake until very tender, about 45 minutes. Transfer to rack; cool 10 minutes.

Using oven mitts, grasp 1 potato in hand. Using a serrated knife, cut off top 1/4 of potato. Using a spoon, scoop out potato, leaving 1/2-inch-thick shell; transfer potato flesh to a large bowl. Repeat with remaining potatoes. Mash potatoes until smooth. Mix in labaneh, then half and half, butter, za'atar, dill, and chives. Season with salt and garlic powder.

Spoon about 3/4 of potato mixture into shells, dividing evenly. Transfer remaining potato filling to a pastry bag fitted with a large star tip. Pipe filling atop potatoes. Place potatoes on a baking sheet.

*All of the above can be done ahead by a day. Just cover loosely with pastic wrap and refrigerate.

Position rack in center of the oven and preheat to 375°F. Bake potatoes until filling is heated through and tops brown, about 20 minutes.

*This post was absolutely sponsored by Tnuva, a company whose products I genuinely love to eat.