

## VORACIOUSLY

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# The best thing I got from my divorce: A recipe for crispy roasted potatoes



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I pull the ketchup out of the fridge.

“Don’t,” my boyfriend says. “You won’t need that.”

If he says so. I pop one of the potatoes he’s just made into my mouth. It’s perfect: crispy and salty, with dream-like, fluffy insides. I don’t even care that I’ve burned my tongue. I’m ready for another.

“We call them roasties,” Rik says, who learned [the recipe](#) from his mother back in England.

So much work had gone into them. Earlier that day, we pawed through a wooden bin of potatoes at a downtown Whole Foods, examining each one for imperfections. Rik fit each potato in the palm of his hand and explained the importance of making sure each potato was the same size.

“So they cook evenly,” he said.

Back at our apartment, a glass of red dangling in hand, I watched him scrape off the skins, zigzagging back and forth across each potato with a sharp blade. He plopped the potatoes into a pot full of boiling water, adorned them with flour, then dumped them into an old, dingy pan, where they sizzled in olive oil in happy unison. Then, we waited.

Occasionally, I opened the oven door. Each time, a blast of heat fogged up my glasses, as if I had walked onto the tarmac at Miami International Airport. One very long hour later, they were ready, a meal all its own, with no other dish needed, except for maybe the rest of that bottle of wine.

How could I not marry him after that? Having someone cook for you is an aphrodisiac, even more so when that someone spends over an hour making potatoes.

We usually went to the grocery store as a team on Sunday, then made the roasties that evening, a treat to get us through the terrible reality that Monday morning was a breath away. I was always up for them, but one night somewhere in that first year of marriage when we were adjusting to life as a married couple, Rik didn't feel like doing the work. I stepped in as a pinch hitter.

I checked in on my batch every 20 minutes, babysitting them until all sides were evenly brown. I became so good at making them that Rik stopped. Even when he offered to make them, I couldn't help myself; I jumped in and took over.

“Brilliant!” he said each time, trying to guess what I had changed. Sometimes, I chopped up garlic and threw it in toward the end, or dusted them with fresh rosemary.

I never stopped making roasties, not even when our marriage fell into trouble and life felt as heavy as a colander full of wet potatoes. The ritual was comforting. I couldn't repair our relationship, neither could saffron, an aphrodisiac that I sneaked into our wine glasses, but I knew how to fix roasties. If they weren't crispy enough, I tossed them back in the oven and cranked up the heat. If they came out dry, there wasn't enough olive oil in the pan — whoops! For anything else, I just sprinkled them with more Maldon salt.

The day I moved out, I left behind my mahogany platform bed and our martini shaker, but I made off across the East River with that old pan, perfect for making roasties. It made the sadness more bearable.

From one apartment to the next, I carried the recipe in my mind, taking my potatoes to potlucks and Friendsgiving dinners.

“Where’d you get the recipe?” people asked.

Revealing the secret of how short-lived my marriage was, with no mortgage, no children, not even a car, was somehow a lot easier while sharing roasties. I always left with the feeling that maybe the incredible recipe Rik and I shared was enough.

I wasn’t looking forward to dating in my 30s, but in my new life, my roasties became an incredible wingman. I started up a long-distance romance with an Irishman and texted him enticing photos of my roast potatoes, assuming if anyone could appreciate a good potato, it would be the Irish.

“Are you having a party?” he replied.

He couldn’t wrap his head around the fact that the pan, overflowing with potatoes, was entirely for me.

I make roasties now on my own in a small New England town, hundreds of miles away from where I learned to make them. Each potato still gets measured in the palm of my hand and examined as if I am a gemologist assessing a diamond. I know that all the work I’m about to do will absolutely be worth it in the end. And though the recipe might have come out of my marriage, I love that it finally feels like it’s mine.