

## Chris Pacione's Sunday Gravy

### Potato Gnocchi with Simple Tomato Sauce and Sausage

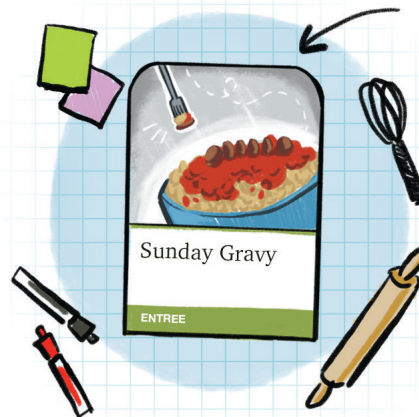


*"My grandmother, Assunta (Susie) Pacione, came to America from Sicily in the early 20th century. Growing up, she would on occasion, like many matriarchs of her day, invite her entire family to her home for a lazy Sunday afternoon meal.*

*Most Italian-American households have their own family recipe for Sunday Sauce, or Sunday Gravy as it is also known. However, common to all variations is a tomato-based sauce, slow cooked with meat such as pork chops, sausage, or meatballs, and served over some type of pasta.*

*This recipe is a translation of my grandmother's version of this traditional Italian comfort food because she never wrote any of her recipes down. But I remember well what it looked like, smelled like, and tasted like. And while in the two dozen or so times I've made this dish, it has never once equaled the magic my grandmother would create, this remains one of my family's favorite meals. I hope you enjoy it."*

— Chris Pacione | CEO, U.S.



#### Preparation:

There are three parts to any Sunday Gravy: The pasta, the sauce and the meat. One of the reasons I chose to share this recipe is that it is authentic, but easy to make.

In this version we are going to make potato gnocchi (the pasta), which when done right is a velvety Italian version of the dumpling. We are going to pair it with an extremely simple but flavorful tomato sauce (the sauce) and enhance the sauce and the meal by cooking it with Italian sausage (the meat).

The following recipe serves four people, with enough for seconds!



## 1. Simple Tomato Sauce and Sausage

*(The sauce and the meat)*

*“This is not only a simple sauce to make, but in my opinion, it is perfect for potato gnocchi because combined, the ingredients make for a rich, finely textured sauce that coats and compliments the gnocchi nicely.” – Chris*

### Ingredients:

- 32 ounces of canned whole peeled plum tomatoes
- 8 tablespoons of butter (yes that is a whole stick, but remember this yields 4+ servings)
- 1 large onion, peeled and cut in half
- ¾ cup of freshly grated Romano cheese
- 5 links of sweet Italian sausages (in casing), that’s about 1.5 pounds
- Salt (preferably sea salt) to taste, only if needed

### Instructions

1. Place 32 ounces of whole peeled plum tomatoes in a food processor or blender and puree.
2. Next, cut each of your 5 sausage links in half.
3. Grab a deep pot, or dutch oven — this will be your sauce pot.
4. Add 1 tablespoon of butter and then brown the 10 small sausage links in the pot/dutch oven (it’s best to do this over high heat — you don’t want to cook the sausage, but brown it on the outside).
5. Once browned, add the tomato puree, plus the rest of the butter, the onion and the cheese.
6. Stir a few times, and then cook on a low simmer for about one hour.
7. Be sure to stir it from time to time to prevent burning or sticking.



## 2. Potato Gnocchi

(The pasta)

*“While the sauce is cooking, you can prepare the gnocchi (which is pronounced nyaw-key), or you can prepare it ahead of time.*

*When making gnocchi the choice of potato is important. Now, I’m sure my grandmother used whatever she could afford or find back in her day, and, through her mastery, made it work. But for us amateurs, I was informed by “Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking” (my bible for preparing Italian food) that neither a baking potato such as the Idaho, or any kind of new or fingerling potato will do. The only reliable potato is the boiling potato like the Yukon Gold. This is to ensure that your dumplings are not too sticky or moist.” – Chris*

### Ingredients:

- 1½ pounds of Yukon Gold or other boiling potato
- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 cup of whipping cream
- 4 tablespoons of butter

### Instructions

1. Boil potatoes with their skins on. Cook until tender. When done, drain and pull off their skins while they are still hot and return to the same pot in which you cooked.
2. Add cream and butter to the potatoes and mash/mix them with a potato masher, beater or food mill while still warm, as if you were making mashed potatoes.
3. Add the flour to the mashed/mixed potatoes and mix together with a wooden spoon. Then remove from the pot, and continue to knead on a flour-dusted surface. You want to knead it until it feels like very soft pasta dough. You may need to add some extra flour if it is too sticky to handle. The final product should be easy to manipulate and handle. Not too stiff, but soft, and capable of being formed into a shape.
4. Next, divide your dough into four equal portions.
5. Take one portion and roll out into a long tube or roll that is about one inch thick and about 30-36 inches long. If this is too large for you to handle, then simply create two rolls about 15-18 inches long.
6. Then cut the roll into pieces that are about one inch thick. But stop here! Don’t roll out or cut the rest of the dough. It’s time to do a quick test.
7. Add about 4-6 quarts of water to a pot and bring to a boil. Be sure to salt the water. This will be the pot in which you will cook all the gnocchi. However, before preparing and cooking it all, it’s a good idea to test the quality of the gnocchi and the flavor of the sauce. Plus, if you have never done this before, this little test allows you to get in a bit of practice before you attempt to cook the whole batch.
8. Once the water is boiling, take just TWO gnocchi and drop them in the water. Once it floats, the gnocchi is about done. Let it continue to cook for about 10 seconds on the top of the water, then remove from the boiling water with a slotted spoon or hand strainer.
9. First test: Consistency. Did you gnocchi fall apart? No? Perfect! Yes? Then you need to add some more flour to your potato mixture and repeat steps 3 and 5. However, this is rare.

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10. Second test: Taste! Put your two gnocchi in a small bowl and add a tablespoon of sauce, just enough to coat and then dust with some freshly grated Romano cheese. Then taste. At this point you are tasting for salt. Taste good? Then you are good to go. Taste too salty? Add some cream to compensate without thinning out your sauce. Need some salt? Then you can add some salt to the sauce. It's up to you and your taste buds. Remember though, Romano is a salty cheese. To properly taste-test, dust the gnocchi with the cheese as you will do when you serve the dish. Be careful not to taste just the sauce. You are prototyping the final product and tasting that.
11. Once your gnocchi has passed the consistency and taste test, roll out and cut up your remaining gnocchi dough. In the end you should have about 120 pieces.
12. Now. It's important to imprint the gnocchi with a texture so it can hold the sauce more successfully. There are many ways to do this. The easiest way I found is to grab your cheese grater. And picking up each individual gnocchi, roll it on the broad side of the grater and onto a cookie sheet with wax paper. If you don't have a cheese grater, you can get the same effect by pushing it into a fork and then just letting it drop on the cookie sheet.

### 3. Putting it all together

1. Grab a shallow serving bowl or deep dish. The wider the better. You want something that isn't compact and deep, but wide and shallow, about 2-4 inches deep.
2. Remove sausage from the sauce pot and place into a side serving bowl. The onion is to be discarded. Make sure the onion has cooked for one hour before doing so.
3. You'll want to cook your gnocchi in three batches (about 40 at a time). Drop the first batch in the water, a few at a time. Be careful not to splash the hot water on your hands.
4. As they float to the top, wait 10 seconds, then pull out a few at a time with a large slotted spoon or hand strainer and place into the large serving bowl. Then spoon the sauce on top of the gnocchi, covering them. Repeat the same process for the second and third batch. You can stir the gnocchi and sauce lightly just to make sure all the pasta is coated but be careful not to smooch the gnocchi.
5. Serve sausage and gnocchi in a soup/pasta bowl with a generous dusting of fresh Romano cheese on top!

# Enjoy!

