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## **Southern Classic: A Guide to Cooking Cube Steak, Green Beans, and Mashed Potatoes**

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### **Introduction**

I have always been enamored with southern style cuisine and the art of southern cooking. I have been a resident of Elizabethton, Tennessee my entire life. Ever since I could remember, somewhere around five years old, I was exposed to southern cooking. I watched my grandmother, Hazel, cook various southern dishes, never in need of a guide or recipe book. Hazel – mamaw Hazel, as I would call her – is my mother’s mom. She is a short little lady, with a very serious demeanor and an unforgettable beehive-style hair-do. She would, on holidays such as Thanksgiving or Christmas Day, seamlessly float through the kitchen, sprinkling flour here, salt there, and produce amazing meals for the entire family.

Cube steak, a cut of top sirloin tenderized with a mallet which leaves cube indentions denoting its name, is one of my favorite dishes. Once you added potatoes, preferably mashed, and green beans, strung and broken fresh from the garden, the dish is complete. It is a perfect melody of starches, vegetables, and protein; however, my first attempt to recreate this dish ended in a complete catastrophe. The cube steak wasn't cooked long enough and was rubbery and tough. Adding too much flour to the gravy caused it to become more like a ball of glue than a rich, brown, delicate liquid; it was horrible.

Though imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, trying to imitate cooking without the years of experience my mamaw possessed was futile for me. Since my first attempt at recreating the dish I have gained about six years of culinary experiences working in restaurant kitchens, Fatz being one of the more notable southern restaurants. Six years is just not enough to create a masterpiece in southern cuisine without having the recipe.

I've since created a recipe guide with the needed ingredients, utensils, and steps to produce an amazing cube steak, creamy mashed potatoes, and perfectly cooked green beans. The recipe is set to serve four people and designed to be simple enough for any home cook.

## **What You Will Need**

### **Utensils**

- ❖ 1 – 15 ¼” Cast iron skillet – used for the cube steak
- ❖ 1 – 5-qt. Stockpot with lid – used for the green beans
- ❖ 1 – 2.5-qt Stockpot with lid – used for the mashed potatoes
- ❖ 1 – 12” Fry pan – used for the cube steak and gravy
- ❖ Aluminum Foil
- ❖ Measuring cups
- ❖ Measuring spoons

### **Ingredients**

- ❖ 4 – Cube Steaks – These can be purchased from local grocery stores or butchers and come packaged and ready to cook. No additional step will be needed to process the cube steaks.
- ❖ 2.5-3lbs – Idaho Potatoes
- ❖ 1-1.5lbs – Green Beans – Fresh from the garden or local farmers market is recommended; however, canned green beans and store bought (fresh/frozen) will also suffice.
- ❖ Flour, Salt, Pepper, Milk – 1 pint (minimum), Butter – 1 stick (4oz)
- ❖ Oil (Vegetable) – at least 16 fluid oz.
- ❖ Bacon – 5 pieces

## Preparation and Cooking

Total Cook/Prep Time – 1hour 45min

The process for cooking cube steak, green beans, and mashed potatoes can be followed in this order. Due to lengthy cook times for the cube steak and green beans, the mashed potatoes will be finished last. The prep time for each item, with the exception of the cube steak, is built in so that everything finishes at the same time.

### Cube Steak/Gravy Prep

Cook time – 1hr 35min

Prep time – 15 min

**Step 1:** Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Step 2:** Line the interior of a cast iron skillet with aluminum foil. Set aside.

**Step 3:** Fill 12” fry pan with just a little more oil than it takes to cover the bottom. Place fry pan over medium heat.

**Step 4:** On a separate plate, pour 3 cups of flour. Add 1tbsp of salt and 1tbsp of pepper. Mix thoroughly.

**Step 5:** Cube steak should be left in refrigerator until it is needed. Take cube steak and place each piece into the flour mix until both sides are coated. (Save leftover flour mix)

**Step 6:** Once all four pieces (or desired amount) are covered, place in the 12” fry pan, turning occasionally until cube steak is browned on both sides, approximately about 5-6min on each side.

**Step 7:** Remove cube steak from fry pan and place in the cast iron skillet that was set aside earlier. The cube steaks should line the bottom of the pan (touching is okay, just don't stack them on one another).

**Step 8:** Using the remnants left in the 12” fry pan, add 2-3tbsp of the leftover flour mix.

Add 4oz of water and mix thoroughly. Pour gravy over the cube steak and cover cast iron skillet with aluminum foil.

**Step 9:** Place cast iron skillet in oven. Bake for 1hr 35min.

## **Green Beans**

Cook time – 1 hour

Prep time – 15-20min

**Step 1:** Fill 5qt stockpot  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water. Add pinch (about 1/8tsp) of salt.

**Step 2:** Begin stringing and breaking green beans. In order to string green beans: hold the green bean upright, break the top of the green bean and pull to the right and down, removing the string-like thread. Turn the green bean 180 degrees and repeat the process.

Once the green bean is strung, break into 3-4 segments. Here is a helpful video on the process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i69T1Qaurb8>

**Step 3:** Once all the green beans are strung and broken, place into stockpot.

**Step 4:** Cut five pieces of bacon in halves and add to the stockpot.

**Step 5:** Cover the stock pot and place over medium heat. Green beans should cook at least an hour.

## **Mashed Potatoes**

Cook time – 25-30min

Prep time – 15-20min

**Step 1:** Peel potatoes and cut long ways into pieces about 1/4 inch thick.

**Step 2:** Place potatoes in 2.5qt stock pot and fill with enough water to just cover the potatoes. Add 1.5-2tbsp of salt.

**Step 3:** Cover stock pot and place potatoes over medium heat for 25-30min or until potatoes become soft.

**Step 4:** Strain excessive water from stock pot.

**Step 5:** Add 1 cup of milk and 2tbsp of butter to potatoes.

**Step 6:** Mash potatoes until desired consistency. I prefer my potatoes creamy. To achieve this, add 1/2 cup more milk.

### **Seasoning, Plating, and Conclusion**

Once you have achieved the desired potato consistency, uncover the green beans and add butter, salt, and pepper to taste. Note that all the water should have boiled off from the green beans. If not, remove excess water before adding ingredients. Once you have finished the potatoes and the green beans, the cube steak should be done within the next five minutes. This gives some leniency in the time it takes each individual item to prep. The cube steak should be removed last. Once removed from the oven, remove the aluminum foil, cover, and let sit for 1-2min. Plate and enjoy.