

foodguide

by JERRY ANNE DI VECCHIO

sweet

I first met John Scharffenberger when he was starting a winery to produce sparkling wines. The wines still bear his name, but John has moved on.

Now, Scharffen Berger is a label on San Francisco-made chocolate—not chocolate confections, but pure chocolate made from cocoa beans. John is buying beans based on origin and quality—including the extremely promising cocoa beans from Hawaii—and then using boutique techniques to roast the beans even more precisely than fine coffee beans are roasted.

The Scharffen Berger product is just another bit of evidence that chocolate is in for a quality upgrade. Before long, you can expect chocolate packaging to note appellations of origin, with the same implications of character as for wines. Starting this month, John's chocolate can be ordered—to eat, for confections, or for cooking. A 1½-kilogram (3.3 lb.) bittersweet bar, gift-wrapped, costs \$38, plus shipping. Call (800) 930-4528.



LEFT: LEIGH BEISCH RIGHT: JAMES CARRIER

LIGHT & EASY

A grand deception

■ The dictionary says *gratinée* means “to have a covering or crust, such as buttered crumbs or cheese.” When the French do potatoes gratin, they are generous with the topping—and make sure there’s plenty of cream beneath.

Our lighter alternative tastes deceptively rich, is extremely easy, and offers a welcome respite from heavy holiday fare. The potatoes bake in a well-seasoned, fat-free broth instead of cream. A bit of cheese is added at the end for a traditional look.

Lean Potatoes Gratin

Prep and cook time: About 1½ hours

Notes: If potatoes are sliced thinner than suggested, they tend to get gummy. The baking liquid bubbles vigorously and will spill out if the container is too small.

Makes: 4 to 6 servings

3¼ to 3½ pounds **thin-skinned potatoes**

3 cups fat-skimmed **chicken** or vegetable **broth**

½ teaspoon **ground nutmeg**

½ teaspoon **pepper**

⅓ cup shredded **gruyère**, cheddar, or fontina **cheese**

1. Peel potatoes and cut into ⅛- to ¼-inch-thick slices. Put the slices in a casserole (11- to 12-cup size, about 10 in. wide and 2 in. deep); shake to settle

the potatoes down into the container.

2. Mix the broth, ground nutmeg, and pepper. Pour the mixture over potatoes.

3. Bake in a 425° oven until potatoes are very tender when pierced, 1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes. As potatoes get dry on top, tilt casserole and spoon up some of the broth to baste them.

4. Sprinkle potatoes evenly with cheese. Bake until it melts, about 3 minutes.

5. Let casserole sit 5 to 10 minutes for most of the remaining juices to soak into potatoes, then serve.

Per serving: 155 cal., 14% (22 cal.) from fat; 8.5 g protein; 2.4 g fat (1.2 g sat.); 25 g carbo (2.3 g fiber); 69 mg sodium; 6.9 mg chol.