Ham & Gruyère Mashed Potato Croquettes with Poached Eggs



Christmas Leftover Series

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Turn leftover Christmas mashed potatoes and holiday ham into a cozy, bistro-style brunch. These golden potato croquettes have a crunchy Panko coating and a creamy center filled with smoky ham, nutty Gruyère, and fresh chives. Add a softly poached egg on top, and its rich yolk becomes a delicious natural sauce.
It's a satisfying way to give holiday leftovers a completely new life.

Servings: 4 (3 croquettes per serving)
Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 15 minutes
Total Time: 30 minutes
Equipment: Large skillet, mixing bowl, three shallow bowls, baking sheet, slotted spoon, and paper towels

YOU'LL NEED

For the Croquettes

- 2½ cups cold leftover mashed potatoes (plain or garlic mashed)
- 1 cup finely diced cooked leftover holiday ham
- ½ cup grated Gruyère cheese (or sharp cheddar)
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup all-purpose flour, for dredging
- 2 large eggs, beaten, for the coating
- 1½ cups Panko breadcrumbs
- Vegetable or canola oil, for shallow frying
- Salt, as needed

For Serving

- 4 large eggs, for poaching
- Fresh chives, for garnish
- Hot sauce or leftover cranberry sauce (optional)

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

1. Prepare the croquette mixture
In a large mixing bowl, combine the cold mashed potatoes, diced cooked ham, grated Gruyère, egg yolk, chopped chives, and black pepper. Mix until evenly combined. The mixture should be firm enough to hold its shape.

2. Shape the croquettes
Divide the mixture into 12 equal portions, using approximately 2 tablespoons per croquette. Shape each portion into a small log or ball. If the mixture feels too soft, mix in 1 tablespoon of flour at a time until easier to handle.

3. Set up the breading station
Place the flour in one shallow bowl, beaten eggs in a second bowl, and Panko breadcrumbs in a third.

4. Coat the croquettes
Roll each croquette lightly in flour, shaking off the excess. Dip it into the beaten egg, then roll it in Panko breadcrumbs until completely coated. Gently press the crumbs onto the surface so they stick. Arrange the coated croquettes on a baking sheet.

5. Fry until golden and crisp
Pour approximately ¼ inch of vegetable or canola oil into a large skillet. Heat over medium to medium-high heat until the oil is hot but not smoking.
Working in batches, carefully add the croquettes without overcrowding the skillet. Fry for approximately 2-3 minutes per side, turning gently, until golden brown and crisp all around. Adjust the heat if the breadcrumbs brown too quickly.
Transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate or wire rack. Season lightly with salt while warm.

6. Poach the eggs
Bring a saucepan of water to a gentle simmer. Crack each egg into a small cup and carefully slide it into the water. Poach for approximately 3-4 minutes for a runny yolk, or longer if you prefer a firmer center. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain briefly.
For food safety, use pasteurized eggs if serving with runny yolks, particularly to children, older adults, pregnant people, or anyone with a weakened immune system.

7. Assemble and serve
Arrange three warm croquettes on each plate. Top with a poached egg, sprinkle with fresh chives, and serve immediately. Add a little hot sauce or a spoonful of cranberry sauce if desired.

Why This Recipe Works for Lazy Holiday Mornings

Cold mashed potatoes are easier to shape than freshly made, warm potatoes. Mixing them with cooked leftover ham, cheese, and egg yolk creates a savory croquette mixture that can be breaded and fried until crisp and golden. Instead of simply reheating yesterday's side dish, you're transforming it into a brunch worth looking forward to.

Flavor Profile, Pairings & Kitchen Notes

Flavor and texture: The Panko coating becomes deeply golden and crunchy, while the inside stays creamy and savory. Gruyère adds a nutty richness, and the ham brings a smoky, salty bite.
What to serve with it: A lightly dressed arugula salad with lemon vinaigrette balances the richness. Fresh fruit or roasted tomatoes also make lovely brunch sides.

Easy substitutions:

- Replace leftover ham with finely chopped cooked bacon.
- Use sharp cheddar, provolone, or Swiss cheese instead of Gruyère.
- Replace Panko with regular breadcrumbs or finely crushed saltine crackers.
- Add a little chopped parsley or thyme for extra herb flavor.

Make-ahead tip: Shape the croquettes up to one day ahead and refrigerate them in a covered container. For the best crunchy coating, bread them shortly before frying. You can also bread them ahead and refrigerate them for a few hours.

Storage and reheating: Refrigerate cooked croquettes promptly in an airtight container and use within 3–4 days. Reheat in a 375°F oven or air fryer until heated through to 165°F. The poached eggs are best prepared fresh. Do not leave cooked ham or potato mixtures at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Cook's Confidence Cue: The croquette mixture should be cold and firm before shaping. If it feels sticky or loose, chill it for 15–20 minutes before adding more flour. Fry one croquette first to check that the coating stays intact and the oil temperature is right.