

### Gratin great for cheese-lovers

As the saying goes, if it's not broken, don't fix it. I agree with this philosophy, but with one caveat: You can always add more cheese — especially when making a potato gratin. A potato gratin is a cheese lover's gift, with ultrathin layers of sliced potatoes blanketed in oozing cheese, cream and, yes, more cheese. It's a rich and comforting side dish, guaranteed to soothe any seasonal blahs.

It's important to invest in the cheese you choose for a gratin. Your cheese must easily melt, of course, and should also provide flavor to the entire dish, including hints of sharpness, earthiness and/or nuttiness. A surefire source I recommend would be the Swiss alps. Note that the term "Swiss" does not refer to the ubiquitous hole-riddled cheese you'll find at your supermarket deli counter. Swiss, in this context, refers to the country and its mountainous alpine region.

The Swiss cheese types may vary in flavor and strength depending on their age and region, but the common denominator is that they are sourced from their many happy cows that blissfully feed on the grass and fauna in the mountains and valleys, which in turn influence and flavor the cows' milk. The result is a smattering of sublime cheeses that are sweet, nutty, floral and earthy and have a flavorful impact. They are worth the splurge.

#### Swiss Potato Gratin

**Active time:** 15 minutes  
**Total time:** 1 hour and 45 minutes  
**Yield:** Serves 6  
**Ingredients:**  
 Unsalted butter  
 2 cups (16 ounces) sour cream  
 1/4 cup heavy cream or half-and-half



LYNDA BALSLEV FOR TASTEFOOD

**A potato gratin is a cheese lover's gift, with ultrathin layers of sliced potatoes blanketed in oozing cheese, cream and more cheese.**

3 garlic cloves, minced  
 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme and/or rosemary leaves  
 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
 Kosher salt  
 Freshly ground black pepper  
 6 ounces coarsely grated Gruyere cheese  
 6 ounces coarsely grated raclette or Appenzeller cheese  
 2 1/2 to 3 pounds Yukon gold potatoes, very thinly sliced, preferably with a mandoline

**Steps:**  
 Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Butter a 2-quart gratin or baking dish.  
 Whisk the sour cream, cream, garlic, thyme, nutmeg, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper in a bowl. Combine the cheeses in a separate bowl.  
 Arrange half of the potatoes in an overlapping layer in the baking dish. Lightly season with salt and black pepper. Spread half of the cream mixture over the potatoes. Sprinkle half of the cheese over the cream. Arrange the remaining potatoes over the cheese and season with salt and black pepper. Top with the remaining cream and then sprinkle the cheese to cover.  
 Butter one side of a piece of aluminum foil and place the foil, butter-side down, over the dish. Bake for 1 hour. Remove the foil and bake until the top is golden brown and bubbly and the potatoes are tender when a knife is inserted, 20 to 30 minutes more. Let the gratin cool for 15 to 20 minutes to settle. Serve warm.

*Lynda Balslev is an award-winning cookbook author, recipe developer, tester and editor. Taste Food is distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication.*

### Sweeteners unproven in fight against diabetes

*The experts continue to plead with us, especially if we aren't going to mask or social distance, to get your vaccines and boosters. Reduce your risk by eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep.*



KATHY KOLASA

Q My mom has diabetes and I drink a lot of sodas. Should I switch to artificially sweetened drinks? I hear both good and bad things about them. JG, Ayden

A It sounds like you are considering lifestyle changes to lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Good for you. If you have a family history of type 2 diabetes, you can reduce your risks of developing the disease with lifestyle changes. Bridget Gallagher is a third-year Brody medical student, and she will try to help you decide what actions to take. Here is what she wants you to know.

Beverages and foods sweetened with FDA-approved, low-calorie sweeteners including Acesulfame potassium, Advantame, Aspartame, Monk fruit sweeteners, Neotame, Saccharin, Stevia sweeteners and Sucralose are considered safe for all — except people with Phenylketonuria or PKU must avoid aspartame.

You probably recognize the brand names of the sweeteners like Equal, Sugar Twin, Sweet 'N Low, SLENDA or the color of their bags — pink, blue and yellow. Low-calorie sweeteners give drinks all the sweetness of regular soda or sweet tea with few or no calories. Some people think they can drink all they want. Does that sound too good to be true? It might be.

It's no secret that regularly drinking sugar-sweetened beverages like soda or sweet tea increases the risk of devel-

oping type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity. So, it might seem like a no-brainer to switch. I will explain a bit later why you need to do so thoughtfully. In the mean-

time, the evidence remains unwavering for choosing water, coffee or unsweet tea instead of sweetened drinks as the time-tested healthier choice. (According to the American Diabetes Association, sugar substitutes may be effective for some individuals, but it is yet to be proven as a good fit for all who wish to reduce their sugar intake.) Here are a few ideas to ease your palate away from sweetened drinks.

If sweet tea is your beverage of choice, swap out a full cup of sweet tea for half unsweet tea. If you enjoy diet sodas, replace just one of your daily diet drinks with a glass of water and lemon. If you frequent the seasonal sweetened lattes at your local coffee spot, ask the barista for two fewer pumps of that flavored syrup. Ever tried sparkling water? Try chilling plain sparkling water with two teaspoons of fresh lemon juice, some mint leaves, and a few fresh strawberries.

Challenge yourself to make these changes for one week and see how it feels. Have a friend who is also looking to reduce their sugar or sweetener intake? Make the changes together and remember you can experience sweetness in life without drinking it! And now, to explain why.

Arguably the most appealing selling point of beverages using low-calorie sweeteners is they have few if any calories.

These sweeteners are made up of chemicals our bodies cannot metabolize and, therefore, cannot gain energy from. However, it may be surprising to learn the evidence is still unclear if replacing the sugar from sodas with artificial sweeteners is sufficient to lower the risk of obesity or type 2 diabetes.

Think about the taste profile of the sodas and why that might be the downside. These sweeteners are all much sweeter than regular sugar — from 100 to 20,000 times as sweet. Similar to how the bitter flavor of coffee or beer grows on your palate over time, repeated stimulation of our sweet sensing taste buds may lead us to prefer that sweetened taste with greater frequency in our diets and that can lead you to eat even more excess calories from all kinds of sugary foods with the risk of putting on even more weight and raising your risk for diabetes.

You need to consider how you will respond to the zero-calorie drinks as you decide. Getting less sugar is important. The Dietary Guidelines say everyone 2 years and older should keep their intake of added sugars to less than 10% of their total daily calories. If you take in about 2,000 calories a day, no more than 200 calories or 12 teaspoons which is what you would get in one soda. The American Heart Association recommends even less added sugar. Could you be happy with one diet drink a day?

*Professor emeritus Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Ph.D., is an affiliate professor in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolasaka@ecu.edu.*

### Please recycle this newspaper.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
 UTILITIES COMMISSION  
 RALEIGH

DOCKET NO. E-22, SUB 644

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of  
 Application by Virginia Electric and Power Company, d/b/a Dominion Energy North Carolina, for Authority to Adjust its Electric Rates and Charges and Revise its Fuel Factor Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. 62-133.2 and NCUC Rule R8-55

SECOND PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the North Carolina Utilities Commission has scheduled a public hearing in the annual fuel charge adjustment cost recovery proceeding for Virginia Electric and Power Company, d/b/a Dominion Energy North Carolina (DENC). The public hearing has been scheduled to begin immediately following the hearing in Docket No. E-22, Sub 643, which is scheduled to begin on Wednesday, November 9, 2022, at 10:00 a.m., in Commission Hearing Room 2115, Dobbs Building, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. This proceeding is being held pursuant to the provisions of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 62-133.2 and Commission Rule R8-55 for the purpose of determining whether an increment or decrement rider is required to allow DENC to recover all reasonable and prudently incurred fuel and fuel related costs. Public witness testimony will be received in accordance with Commission Rule R1-21(g).

On August 9, 2022, DENC filed its application for approval of its fuel and fuel-related cost recovery pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 62-133.2 and Commission Rule R8-55. By its application, DENC requests a change in its fuel charges effective for service rendered on and after February 1, 2023. Due to the significance of the under recovery of its fuel costs during the Test Period and recognizing the impact of such a proposed increase in fuel rates upon customers during the Rate Year, DENC proposes two rate adjustments for the Commission's consideration: a Full Recovery rate and a Stepped Mitigation rate. As filed, the net effect of DENC's Full Recovery request would increase the monthly bill of a residential customer using 1,000 kWh of electricity by \$18.76 — an increase of 17%. As filed, the net effect of DENC's Stepped Mitigation request would increase the monthly bill of a residential customer using 1,000 kWh of electricity during this period by \$9.38 — an increase of 8%. The Stepped Mitigation approach would then increase to the same per kWh rates for the period of August 1, 2023, through January 31, 2024, as those listed for DENC's Full Recovery request.

On September 16, 2022, the Commission issued an Order Scheduling Hearing, Requiring Filing of Testimony, Establishing Discovery Guidelines, and Requiring Public Notice (Scheduling Order). Among other things, the Scheduling Order required the Company to publish notice in a newspaper or newspapers having general circulation in its service area once a week for two successive weeks beginning at least 35 days prior to the hearing.

On October 17, 2022, DENC filed a Petition to Modify Test Period to include the Company's deferral balance for the months of July, August, and September 2022, which, if approved by the Commission, would result in an additional increase in DENC's proposed monthly fuel rates and fuel charges higher than the charges noticed in the original Public Notice.

DENC's supplemental update to the Full Recovery request, if approved and inclusive of the regulatory fee, would result in the following increases for DENC's customers: 2.5909 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential customers; 2.5870 cents per kWh for small general service and public authority customers; 2.5699 cents per kWh for large general service customers; 2.4909 cents per kWh for rate schedule NS customers; 2.5266 cents per kWh for rate schedule 6VP customers; and 2.5909 cents per kWh for outdoor lighting and traffic customers. The net effect of this request would increase the monthly bill of a residential customer using 1,000 kWh of electricity by \$25.91 — an increase of approximately 23%.

DENC's supplemental update to the Stepped Mitigation request, if approved and inclusive of the regulatory fee, would result in the following increases for DENC's customers for the period of February 1, 2023, through July 31, 2023: 1.2955 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residential customers; 1.2935 cents per kWh for small general service and public authority customers; 1.2850 cents per kWh for large general service customers; 1.2455 cents per kWh for rate schedule NS customers; 1.2633 cents per kWh for rate schedule 6VP customers; and 1.2955 cents per kWh for outdoor lighting and traffic customers. The net effect of this request would increase the monthly bill of a residential customer using 1,000 kWh of electricity during this period by \$12.95 — an increase of approximately 12%. The Stepped Mitigation approach would then increase to the same per kWh rates for the period of August 1, 2023, through January 31, 2024, as those listed above for DENC's revised Full Recovery request. In its next fuel proceeding (which will be filed next year) the Company intends to propose rates to recover the balance resulting from the use of the Stepped Mitigation approach.

Also on October 17, 2022, DENC filed supplemental testimony and exhibits in support of the same.

Further information is available to the public by reviewing DENC's application on the Commission's website at [www.ncuc.net](http://www.ncuc.net).

The Public Staff is authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Written statements to the Public Staff should include any information that the writers wish to be considered by the Public Staff in its investigation of the matter. Such statements should be addressed to Christopher J. Ayers, Executive Director, Public Staff 4326 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300.

The Attorney General is also authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Statements to the Attorney General should be addressed to The Honorable Josh Stein, Attorney General, c/o Consumer Protection - Utilities, 9001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27699-9001. Written statements may be emailed to [utilityAGO@ncdoj.gov](mailto:utilityAGO@ncdoj.gov).

Persons desiring to send written statements to inform the Commission of their positions in the matter should address their statements to the North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300 and reference Docket No. E-22, Sub 644. However, such written statements cannot be considered competent evidence unless those persons appear at the hearing and testify concerning the information contained in their written statements. Persons may also email the Commission a statement about the application via the Commission's website at [www.ncuc.net/contactus.html](http://www.ncuc.net/contactus.html). In either case, consumer statements will be placed in Docket No. E-22, Sub 644, and may be accessed by searching that docket number via the Commission's website.

This the 19th day of October, 2022.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION  
 Erica N. Green, Deputy Clerk



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