Despite all the blooming and greening of spring, it doesn’t offer much to eat. The corn is ankle-high, the peaches leave a lot to the imagination, and many farmers and gardeners have barely planted out their tomatoes. But you can always eat Kale Potato Salad.

This salad is so transformative that even teenagers ask for it. I know a young woman who requested it for her graduation party. The combination of rosemary, celery seed and thyme in the vinaigrette evokes the flavor of marinated artichokes. Each component of the salad, including kale leaf and stem, cheddar cheese chunk and potato, holds the dressing differently. It's a side dish that doesn't need a main event.

Kale is an early-season producer, and freezes well too. The fall harvest is the sweetest and most abundant of the year, and I like to freeze a big stash to eat through winter and spring.  This time of year I make it with either fresh or frozen kale.

It's a template as much of a recipe, a style of potato salad. You can make it with as much or as little kale as you want, cook the kale much or little as you wish, chop it as small as you care to, and even substitute other fibrous greens like dandelion or collards. You can even add crispy bits of bacon.

But incredibly, one ingredient the recipe does not call for is mayo. I may be worldly in some ways, but I'm very provincial when it comes to both potato salad and mayonnaise. Potato salad needs mayo, and mayo needs to go on everything. But there is a long tradition, most famously in France but elsewhere too, of naked, mayo-free potato salad. And I must admit, Kale Potato Salad has made me question some of my most deeply held beliefs.

**Kale Potato Salad**

Chunks of potatoes plastered and speckled with kale, full of that unmistakable potato salad-dy flavor of summer.  Here at the end of spring, we can still find cool enough days to serve it warm, as a comforting bowlful.

*Serves 4*

4 cups diced red potatoes (they hold together best), peeled or not
4-ish cups of kale (or other fibrous greens). Stripped from the center vein and chopped. Optional: chop of the ribs, which are tougher, to cook with the potatoes.  If using frozen kale, it should be thawed.
2 cups stock
½ cup olive oil (or more, to taste)
¼ cup white vinegar
½ tablespoon mustard powder
1 teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon ground or dried rosemary
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 garlic cloves, and more to taste, minced or grated
½ cup minced onion
½ cup minced celery
1 cup finely diced cheddar cheese. Good, flavorful cheddar. Like an aged raw milk
Salt, to taste
Optional: red pepper flakes

Boil potatoes in the stock or water with 3 tablespoons of olive oil. About ten minutes in, add any chopped kale rib you care to.

While the potatoes are cooking, make the dressing. Combine remaining oil, vinegar, mustard powder, herbs and garlic. If using whole dried herbs, powder them between your fingers as you add them. Shake vigorously in a closed jar or otherwise stir very well.

When the potatoes are nearly tender, add the kale and stir it in with a scooping motion so as not to crush the potatoes. When the liquid is gone, turn off the heat.

If serving warm, finish the recipe immediately. If serving cold, let the potatoes and kale cool first.

To finish, add the onion, celery, cheddar, pepper flakes if using and dressing, and toss the salad. Add more salt and/or oil to taste. If serving cool, it’s best to make kale potato salad a day ahead. Just make sure to make extra, or there won’t be enough.