**Fully Loaded Baked Potato Soup**

2 large russet potatoes, scrubbed

4 bacon slices

2 tbsp Butter

1 garlic cloves, minced

1/4 cup chopped yellow onion

3 Tbsp all-purpose flour

1 cup milk

½ cup half and half

2 cup chicken stock

½ tsp salt, plus more to taste

¼ tsp garlic powder, plus more to taste

¼ tsp black pepper

1 cup shredded mild cheddar cheese

½ cup sour cream

Minced fresh chives, for garnish

1. Peel and dice potatoes
2. cook the bacon in a skillet over medium-high heat until crisp. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain and cool. Reserve up to 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat from the pan, discarding the rest. Once the bacon has cooled, crumble it into small pieces.
3. In a large pot, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the reserved bacon fat, garlic and onion and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the onion is tender. Slowly whisk the flour into the pan and stir for 1 to 2 minutes.
Slowly whisk in the milk and half-and-half. Keep whisking until smooth. Gradually add the chicken stock. Bring to a light simmer and whisk in the salt, garlic salt and pepper and Diced Potatoes. Keep at a light simmer until the mixture has thickened slightly, 5 to 7 minutes.
4. Continue to simmer the soup for about 10-12 min until potatoes are fork tender.
5. If you'd like to use cheeses and bacon as a garnish, reserve 1/4 cup of t each.
Stir in the remaining cheese, remaining bacon, and the sour cream. Remove the pot from the heat.

Serve hot, topped with your favorite garnishes, like cheese, bacon and chives.