

Earthy Girl's Guide to Meatless Meals

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INTRODUCTION

Cooking, to me, is a demonstration of love. Love of thy self; and love of those we cook for. My mother is a great cook, and I am grateful that she brought us into the kitchen and taught myself and my siblings how to cook. All of my siblings are great cooks, and I believe we have our mother to thank for that.

I can recall that even as a young girl, I had a keen awareness of what I was eating, and a desire to treat my body with respect. Now don't get me wrong, I ate junk food right along with everyone else, and struggled to find the balance between the two. In fact, I was never a fan of vegetables when I was young, unless you count dipping raw veggies into a heavy sour cream based dip. I do think that my taste has matured, but even more so, I believe that since becoming a vegetarian, I have spent a great deal of time experimenting with food – vegetables, legumes, grains, herbs and spices – in search of dishes that are texturally interesting; visually appealing; and most importantly, tantalizing to the taste buds.

Today I try to adhere to the 90/10 rule of eating. Ninety percent of the time I choose healthy, nutrient rich whole foods; and ten percent of the time I allow myself “naughty” treats.

My journey with food has taken me in many directions over the years. On July 5, 2009, I became a vegetarian. The reason why doesn't really matter. For some, the decision to eat a plant based diet is a moral one centered on the mistreatment of animals, and compassion toward all animals – not just our own puppies and kittens. For others, it is about a desire to improve one's health.

In 2003 the Meatless Monday movement regained popularity when Sid Lerner, a public health advocate, introduced it as part of a public health awareness campaign. The truth is, eating meatless just one day a week can have a significant impact on improving our health. In fact, Meatless Mondays have been endorsed by the John Hopkins University of Public Health; the Mayo Clinic; the National Cancer Institute; as well as the highly respected cardiac surgeon, Dr. Mehmet Oz.

This book is an expression of my journey as a vegetarian, but more so, an expression of love for those I cook for and eat with. My desire is to share my adventure in preparing plant based food with you. Should you be a vegetarian? That is not for me to say. Each of us is on a journey through this life, and through that journey each of us makes choices that align with who we are and who we desire to be. If incorporating more meatless meals into your diet is a part of your journey, I would be honored to share in that journey by sharing my family's favorites.

Be a fearless foodie!

As Always, Be Kind and Eat Well!

CHAPTER 1: BREAKFAST



Breakfast Smoothie

Quinoa with Blueberries and Walnuts

Pear and Blueberry Oatmeal with Walnuts

Breakfast Tacos

Springtime Asparagus Frittata

Fall Frittata

Muffin Frittatas

Brunch Enchiladas

Popeye's Egg Sandwich

Pasta Cakes with Eggs

Pecan Crusted French Toast

Mascarpone Stuffed French Toast with Strawberries

Multigrain Pancakes

Lemon Ricotta Hotcakes with Strawberries

BREAKFAST SMOOTHIE

Ingredients

2-3 generous handfuls kale or spinach
1 banana (fresh or frozen) broken in chunks
1 cup blueberries (or other berries or fruit)
2 tablespoons ground flax seeds
2 tablespoons protein powder (I prefer hemp protein powder)
1 – 1 ½ cups almond milk
Cinnamon to taste

Directions

In a blender, combine all the ingredients and blend until smooth. Add extra milk, or a touch of water to achieve your desired consistency. You can also add a few ice cubes if you have used fresh fruit, rather than frozen.

QUINOA WITH BLUEBERRIES AND WALNUTS

This is one of my favorite breakfasts. Before I met my husband, you couldn't get me to eat oatmeal, let alone quinoa. That is no longer the case. Quinoa is a great source of protein and is very adaptable to a variety of dishes.

Ingredients

1/2 cup cooked quinoa (per package directions)*

1/2 - 1 cup blueberries (or other fruit)

Almond milk

Walnuts, slivered almonds, or pumpkin seeds

Cinnamon

Directions

Place the cooked quinoa in a cereal bowl. Add blueberries and milk (enough milk to get desired consistency for you). If you are using frozen blueberries, place in the microwave for about 60 seconds. Next, stir in cinnamon and a handful of nuts.

*Quinoa: If your quinoa package does not state that it is prewashed, be sure to rinse the quinoa thoroughly as it has a bitter taste if not rinsed.

PEAR and BLUEBERRY OATMEAL with WALNUTS

This is a quick, easy, and healthy breakfast for any day of the week. As my husband says, it's a great breakfast to help massage your colon.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup old fashion oats
- 1 pear, diced
- Water
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup blueberries, fresh or frozen
- ¼ cup milk
- Small handful of walnuts (or other nut of your liking)

Directions

Place the oatmeal and diced pear, and cinnamon in a single serving cereal bowl and mix together. Add just enough water to just cover the oatmeal. Place in the microwave and heat for 3 minutes.

Remove from the microwave. Add the blueberries and milk, combine. If using frozen blueberries, return to the microwave for an additional minute.

Add the walnuts and enjoy.

BREAKFAST TACOS

Chorizo Breakfast Tacos

Ingredients

2 Vegetarian Chorizo Sausages - removed from casing (I like Field Roast Brand Mexican Chipotle Sausages)

2-3 Eggs

Cilantro, chopped

Onion, chopped

Flour or Corn Tortillas

Salsa

Directions

In a medium skillet, over medium heat, fry the chorizo until cooked through. Set aside.

Beat the eggs with a pinch of salt and pepper. In the same skillet you used for the chorizo, add the eggs and cook over medium heat undisturbed for a minute or so, allowing them to set. With a rubber spatula, stir the eggs off the bottom of the pan until they are at your desired doneness. I say your desired doneness because if there is anything that I've learned about making scrambled eggs over the years, it is that some people like them light and fluffy, and some like them a little more wet.

In the meantime, heat a griddle or large fry pan for the tortillas. Heat the tortillas for about 30 seconds per side. I like to leave mine on slightly longer until they get a little color and bubble up a bit. I think it adds a little texture and some extra flavor!

To put it all together, simply load your taco with the eggs, chorizo, onions, cilantro and your favorite salsa. I am intentionally leaving the amount of each out, as I find that putting a taco together is all about what is to your liking.

Black Bean Breakfast Tacos

Ingredients

2-3 organic, cage free eggs

Small onion, chopped

Seasoned black beans, drained

¼ cup cheddar cheese, shredded

Flour or corn tortillas

Salsa

Cilantro, chopped

Directions

Beat the eggs with a pinch of salt and pepper. Put skillet over medium heat. Melt a pat of butter/oil, then add the eggs and cook undisturbed for a minute or so allowing them to set. Add in the beans and onions. With a rubber spatula, stir the eggs off the bottom of the pan until they are at your desired doneness. Just before the eggs are done, add in the cheese and cook until the cheese is melted.

In the meantime, heat a griddle or large fry pan for the tortillas. Heat the tortillas for about 30 seconds per side, or slightly longer (depending on your preference) until they get a little color and bubble up a bit.

To put it all together, simply load your taco with the eggs mixture and top with your favorite salsa and cilantro. Enjoy!

SPRINGTIME ASPARAGUS FRITTATA



As spring arrives, so does a bounty of fresh, tender asparagus. This lovely springtime frittata is just one great way to prepare asparagus. I really enjoy preparing frittatas, as they are quick and easy, and the variations are endless. Just switch out the asparagus for another veggie of your choosing (perhaps some spinach or broccoli), and have some fun experimenting with different cheeses.

Ingredients

- 2 cups asparagus, cut into 1" diagonal pieces
- 1 1/2 cups button mushrooms, sliced
- 1 medium onion, diced (scallions or leeks would work too)
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 8 organic, cage free eggs*
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup fontini cheese (or other cheese of your choosing - goat cheese is great too)
- 1-2 Tablespoons chives, chopped
- Parmesan cheese, grated

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

In a medium skillet, heat oil over medium high heat. Add the asparagus, mushrooms, onions and a pinch of salt and pepper. Sauté until the asparagus is tender (about 5-8 minutes).

Meanwhile, in a bowl, beat the eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Stir in the fontini cheese. Once the vegetables are done, gently fold them into the egg mixture. Pour the mixture into a pie plate and place in the oven. Bake for 20- 25 minutes, until the top starts to get golden brown.

During the last few minutes of baking, sprinkle with the grated parmesan and the chives and put back in the oven to finish cooking.

This dish works great for a variety of meals: breakfast, brunch, or a light supper. When I serve this for breakfast or brunch, I simply serve it with whole grain toast and an ice cold glass of milk.

When served as a light supper meal, it is great with a simple salad, which will make good use of the fresh spinach at the farmers market!

*A note about eggs: When it comes to eggs, cage free is always the way to go. It's important to purchase your eggs where you know the chickens who laid them for you were treated with kindness.

FALL FRITTATA



Nothing says fall like sweet potatoes fresh from the farmer's market. The combination of the veggies and goat cheese is nothing short of divine!

Ingredients

- 1 onion, diced
- 1 sweet potato, diced
- 1 cup of cauliflower florets, small
- 1 cup broccoli florets, small
- Vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper
- 8 organic, cage free eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
- 4-6 ounces goat cheese

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

In a medium skillet, heat oil over medium high heat. Add the onions & sweet potato and a pinch of salt. Cook about 5-8 minutes, until vegetable start to soften and caramelize. Add the broccoli and cauliflower and an additional pinch of salt and pepper. Cook for an additional 8-10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a bowl, beat the eggs, milk, and a pinch of salt & pepper. Once the vegetables are done, gently fold them into the egg mixture. Pour the mixture into a pie plate. If you are using an oven safe skillet you do not need to transfer to a pie plate. Next, drop dollops of goat cheese on the top and place in the oven.

Bake for 20 - 25 minutes, until the top starts to get golden brown.

Take from the oven and let it sit for 5 minutes before serving to allow the eggs to set.

MUFFIN FRITTATAS

Now here's a great idea for a Sunday brunch - Muffin Frittatas! It's time to pull out those old muffin tins, dust them off, and put them to good use.

The variations to this recipe are endless. You can choose vegetables that are to your liking; you can add cheese - or not; and you can choose what kind of cheese.

Like I said the possibilities are endless. I'll give you the basic recipe and you can take it from there.

One thing to keep in mind: When you sauté the veggies, be sure you drain the excess liquid before mixing the veggies in with the egg mixture. If you don't, you may end up with soggy muffins.

Ingredients

3 whole organic, cage free eggs
6 organic, cage free egg whites
1/2 cup milk
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1/2 cup cheese (some of my favorites are goat, feta, or parmesan)
1 cup chopped vegetable of your choosing
1/2 small red onion (green onions would be lovely as well)

Directions

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Add 2 Tbsp oil to medium skillet and heat on medium high heat. Add your veggies and sauté for 2-3 minutes. If you are using spinach, I would sauté the other veggies first. After a couple of minutes, add the spinach and sauté for 1-2 minutes more, until the spinach is wilted. Remove from heat to cool.

While the veggies are cooling, beat the eggs, milk, salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Add the cheese and veggies; mix well.

Spoon the egg mixture into 12 greased muffin cups (about 1/4 cup each). If you are trying to decrease the overall cheese content, you could choose to simply sprinkle a little on top of each muffin before putting in the oven.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes (just until set). Cool on a rack for about 5 minutes. Remove each muffin and serve warm.

Serving size: 2-3 muffins per person. Serve with whole wheat toast and fresh fruit.

These are great to make ahead of time for a quick, on the go breakfast in the morning!

BRUNCH ENCHILADAS

I love this dish for a Sunday brunch. The best part is that I can put it all together the night before so that I can sleep in on Sunday morning! It is perfect with whole grain toast and juice, or for my husband – a nice strong cup of coffee.

Ingredients

1 14 ounce can great northern beans (or other white bean) drained and rinsed
½ cup green onions, chopped
8-10 flour tortillas (8 inch)
8 ounces cheddar cheese (2 cups) shredded
1 tablespoon flour
2 cups half & half cream
6 organic, cage free eggs, lightly beaten
Salt and pepper

Directions

In a large bowl, combine the beans, onions, and pinch of salt and pepper. Using a 1/3 cup, place the bean mixture in the center of a tortilla. Top with about 2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up and place seam side down in a greased 9x13 inch baking pan. So far this is just like making enchiladas.

In a separate bowl, combine the flour, half & half, eggs and a pinch of salt. Whisk together. Pour over the tortillas. Cover and let rest in the refrigerator overnight.

Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Still covered, bake in a 350 degree oven for 25-30 minutes. Remove from the oven, uncover and sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Return to the oven and bake for an additional 10 minutes.

Remove from the oven and let stand for 10 minutes before serving. This will allow the eggs to set up a bit.

Variations: To spice this up a bit, you could substitute seasoned black beans, or a diced jalepeno to the bean mixture.

POPEYE'S EGG SANDWICH



Popeye knew the importance of eating his spinach. This recipe is a tasty and healthy way to start your day. This is also a great way to use leftover spinach from the night before. If you don't have leftovers, do worry as the garlic spinach takes just minutes to prepare.

Ingredients

- 1 slice whole grain bread, toasted
- 1 ounce goat cheese
- ¼ cup garlic spinach (recipe in sides and salads)
- 1 organic, cage free egg
- Black pepper to taste

Directions

Prepare the garlic spinach per recipe directions.

In a separate skillet, fry an egg to your preferred doneness. I prefer to have my yolk a little runny so that when I break it open, it will run over the spinach and toast.

To put it all together, spread goat cheese over the slice of toast. Top with spinach and then the egg. Finish by seasoning with cracked black pepper.

This is a great light breakfast; best served with a side of fresh fruit.

PASTA CAKES with EGGS

This is a great recipe for leftover pasta. With a teenage boy in the house, it isn't often that there are leftovers, but on occasion it does happen. I would not recommend a tomato based pasta. I would instead recommend an olive oil / vegetable pasta. One of my guys' favorite versions is made with squash and angel hair pasta.

Ingredients

3 cups (give or take) leftover pasta.
3 organic, cage-free eggs, whisked
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
Pinch of black pepper
Olive oil
Butter

Additional eggs – 2 per person

Directions

Place the leftover pasta in a bowl. Add in the whisked eggs, cheese and a pinch of pepper. Gently mix together.

Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add 1-2 tablespoons olive oil and a pat of butter (for extra flavor).

Form the pasta into 4 inch pancakes and place in the skillet. Fry for 2-3 minutes on each side – until crunchy and golden brown.

Meanwhile, in another skillet, fry 2 over-easy eggs per person. The over easy part is important.

To serve: Place 2 pasta pancakes on a warm plate, and top with 2 eggs. When you break into the yolks they flow over the pasta cakes and the result – pure yumminess!

PECAN CRUSTED FRENCH TOAST

During the week, everyone is on their own as far as breakfast goes. However, on the weekends, it's important to me to make a special breakfast for my guys. They are important to me and this is one simple way that I try to show my love for them. My husband has declared this to be "The best French toast I've ever eaten." So, for a twist on that same old, same old French toast recipe you've been making for years, go ahead and give this recipe a try. You will not be disappointed!

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups milk (cow, almond, soy or rice)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans
- 6 to 8 slices whole wheat or whole wheat raisin bread
- Pure maple syrup for topping

Directions

In a medium bowl, whisk together the milk, cinnamon, and vanilla. Transfer the mixture to a shallow bowl. Place the chopped pecans in another shallow bowl.

In a large skillet over medium heat, add 2 tablespoons butter.

One slice at a time, dip the bread in the milk mixture, turning to soak both sides. Dip one side in the pecans, pressing to coat.

Arrange the bread in the skillet (you might have to do more than one batch), pecan side down.

Cook 2-3 minutes, until the pecans are well-browned. Carefully turn the bread, and continue cooking until the second side is browned, 2-3 minutes.

Serve immediately with maple syrup.

MASCARPONE & STRAWBERRY STUFFED FRENCH TOAST

Not sure what to do with all those freshly picked strawberries? Stuffed Mascarpone French Toast with Strawberries is a great Sunday morning treat for the whole family. In case you are wondering what Mascarpone is, it's a cheese - a triple cream cheese. All I know is it tastes very yummy.

This is really quite an easy recipe, and the variations are endless. If you are not a big fan of strawberries, simply switch out the strawberries for raspberries, blueberries, apples, peaches, etc. One of my favorite varieties is with apples and walnuts over top.

Ingredients

- 4 ounces mascarpone cheese
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 tablespoon honey
- 8 slices day old French or Italian bread
- 2 organic cage free eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon (cardamom would be nice too)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Strawberries
- Lemon

Directions

For the filling: in a small bowl, mix together the cheese, lemon zest and honey. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, cinnamon and vanilla. Set aside.

In another bowl, slice the strawberries. Drizzle with honey and a touch of juice from the lemon you zested. Set aside.

Now, to put it all together.

Spread one fourth of the mascarpone mixture on a slice of bread. Put a layer of strawberries on top of the cheese mixture. Top this with another slice of bread, making a sandwich.

Place the sandwich in the egg mixture to coat as you normally would for French toast. Place in a heated skillet or griddle. I like to put a little butter in the pan, or the griddle, for extra flavor. Cook on each side until golden brown - just like normal French toast.

To plate, place the French toast on a plate and top with the strawberry mixture. Dust with powdered sugar.

Now that's a tasty treat!

MULTIGRAIN PANCAKES

Ingredients

1 cup almond milk
1 cup plain Greek yogurt
½ cup oatmeal – not quick cook
¼ cup ground flax seed
1 cup oat flour (can be made by putting oatmeal in a food processor)
½ teaspoon baking powder (aluminum free)
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon salt
1 generous teaspoon vanilla extract
2 organic, cage free eggs
2 tablespoons honey (or agave)
1 tablespoon canola oil
½ cup chopped walnuts

Directions

In a bowl, whisk together the almond milk and yogurt. Mix in the oats and set aside for about 15 minutes.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the flax seed, flours, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the honey, oil and vanilla and whisk together. Pour into the yogurt oatmeal mixture and gently combine. Do not over stir.

Next, pour the egg mixture into the flour mixture. Add the walnuts, and gently combine, being careful not to over mix. Some lumps are okay.

Heat a griddle or fry pan over medium to medium high heat. Coat with 1 tablespoon oil of your liking. Using a 1/3 measuring cup, scoop batter onto the griddle. Cook until bubbles appear on the surface of the pancakes and start to burst. (As a kid, I always loved watching and waiting patiently for the bubbles to burst!). Flip the pancakes and cook a few minutes longer, until the pancakes are browned.

If you are not cooking on a griddle and want to keep the pancakes warm until they are all prepared, simply place in a warm oven.

Variations: fold in blueberries (fresh or frozen/thawed); add zest of one lemon; substitute cardamom for the cinnamon; substitute pecans or almonds for the walnuts; or if you have nut allergies, leave them out all together.

LEMON RICOTTA HOTCAKES WITH STRAWBERRIES

I first had lemon ricotta hotcakes at a local café, The Nucleus, and I have to say it was “Love at first bite.” It is served simply with strawberries and a dollop whipped cream.

Ingredients

¾ cup flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon nutmeg – freshly grated if possible
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sugar
1 cup ricotta cheese
2 organic, cage free eggs (yolks and whites separated)
2/3 cup milk
Zest and juice of 1 organic lemon

Directions

In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, nutmeg, and salt.

In a separate bowl, using a hand mixer beat the egg whites until frothy. Then, gradually beat in 1 tablespoon sugar until soft peaks form. (Just like you would if making a meringue for pie).

In another bowl, whisk the egg yolks, the other tablespoon of sugar and the lemon zest. Then whisk in the milk.

Add the egg yolk mixture to the dry ingredients and combine until just blended. Fold in half of the egg white mixture – just to blend. Fold in the ricotta, just to blend. Then fold in the remaining egg white mixture.

Heat a griddle or fry pan to medium heat. Scoop pancake batter onto griddle using a 1/3 or ½ cup measuring cup (depending on what size pancake you want). Cook until bubbles appear and start to burst, and the bottom of the pancakes are a golden brown. Flip and cook for an additional 1-2 minutes.

To serve: Place 2 pancakes on a warm plate with a pat of whipped butter, some fresh sliced strawberries and a dollop of whipped topping. Divine! A nice cup of fresh brewed tea or coffee would be nice, too.

Chapter 2: SOUPS and CHOWDERS



Black Bean Soup

Butternut Squash Soup

Cauliflower Chowder

Corn Chowder

Okra Baby Bella Soup

Sundried Tomato with Beans and Kale

The Soup of the Rolling Plains (of Colorado)

The Soup of the Smiling Palms

Tortilla Soup

Vegetarian Chili

BLACK BEAN SOUP

This is a great and very quick soup to warm you on a cool fall day. Serve with artesian whole grain bread and a glass of milk and your meal is complete. Enjoy.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 carrots, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- salt
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- Black pepper to taste
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 4 (15 ounce) cans black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups whole kernel corn
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans tomatoes, crushed or diced

Directions

In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium high heat. Add onions and garlic and a pinch of salt and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add carrots and a pinch of salt, and sauté for 5 minutes. Add chili powder, cumin and black pepper, cook for an additional minute, until fragrant. Add the vegetable broth, 2 cans of black beans and corn. Bring to a boil.

In a food processor, puree the remaining 2 cans of black beans and the tomatoes. Add to the boiling soup and simmer for an additional 10-15 minutes.

Serves 6-8

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

This soup has all the goodness of the fall harvest with just a touch of sweetness. It is great served simply with salad and sandwich. I also like this soup in a mug as a mid morning or mid afternoon snack.

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 4 leeks (white and pale green parts), chopped and rinsed thoroughly
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 3 sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and sliced
- 8 cups vegetable broth
- ½ cup apple cider
- 1 cup almond milk
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

In a large stock pot, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in the leeks and onions, and cook until the onions are translucent, about 4-5 minutes. Add the sweet potato, squash, apple and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer until the vegetables are soft, about 20 minutes.

Puree the above in batches in a blender or food processor. Return the pureed soup to the stock pot and stir in the apple cider and almond milk. Season with nutmeg, salt and pepper. Simmer for several more minutes.

To serve: ladle into bowls or mug.

CORN CHOWDER



This chowder is another yummy creation of my husband Stephen's. He is the King of Soup. I like to affectionately call him the Soup Nazi (a Seinfeld reference for those of you who are not familiar).

Ingredients

- 1 large onion, chopped
- ½ cup butter
- 2 ½ cups water
- 2 15 ounce cans cream-style corn
- 4 medium red potatoes, cut into ½ inch cubes
- 2 cups milk
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- ¾ teaspoon black pepper
- Small handful fresh parsley, minced

Directions

In a large pot, or Dutch oven, sauté the onion in the butter until tender. Add the water, corn and potatoes, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes, or until the potatoes are fork tender.

Stir in the milk, salt and pepper. Cook for 5-10 minutes, until just heated through, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

CAULIFLOWER CHOWDER



Ingredients

5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
6-8 scallions, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 ribs celery, diced
2 medium cauliflower, cored and broken – you could use broccoli in place of part of the cauliflower
¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon sea salt
¼ teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
4 cups skim milk
4 cups water
2 tablespoons Better Than Bouillon vegetable base
1/8 teaspoon fresh ground nutmeg

Directions

In a stock pot, over medium heat, sauté the onion and garlic with 2 tablespoons oil. Then add the other ingredients and bring to a very light boil. Let simmer until the cauliflower is soft, about 20-30 minutes. Stir frequently.

OKRA BABY BELLA SOUP

I'm always amazed that my husband can create so many yummy soups. This is a family favorite, and in my opinion – a masterpiece.

Ingredients

16 ounce bag frozen okra, chopped
2 cups spinach, torn
8 ounces baby bella mushrooms, sliced into large pieces
2 zucchini, cut into bite sized chunks
5 scallions, chopped – greens included
2/3 cup brown rice
2 tablespoons Better Than Bouillon vegetable base
2 tablespoons lemon pepper
1 tablespoon oregano
½ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
2 bay leaves
10 cups water
Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Directions

In a large stock pot, combine all the ingredients – except the cheese. Bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to low. Continue to simmer until the rice is cooked (about 30-40 minutes).

To serve: ladle soup into serving bowls and top with fresh parmesan cheese. This is great served with crusty bread on the side – great for dipping and soaking up all the broth.

SUNDRIED TOMATO SOUP with BEANS & KALE



Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
Dash of red pepper flakes
1 medium onion, diced
2 carrots, diced
2 ribs celery, diced
1 red pepper, diced
½ teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped
2 cups vegetable broth
2 15 ounce cans diced tomatoes
1 15 ounce can cannellini beans (or great northern) drained and rinsed
½ cup oil packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped, plus 2 tablespoons oil from jar
1 bunch kale, chopped
½ teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
1 cup fresh basil, torn

Directions

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and red pepper flakes, and cook about 1 minute, until fragrant. Stir in the onions, carrots, celery, red pepper and rosemary, and cook for 10-15 minutes, or until the onions are soft.

Add the vegetable broth, one can of the diced tomatoes, and the beans. Scoop 1 cup of the mixture into a food processor or blender, along with the remaining can of tomatoes, the sun-dried tomatoes, and the oil. Puree until smooth, and then stir the mixture back into the soup, and season with salt and pepper. Simmer 10 –15 minutes.

Add the kale, basil, and thyme, and simmer 5 minutes longer, just long enough for the kale to wilt. (You could also use spinach or chard in place of the kale).

THE SOUP OF THE ROLLING PLAINS (OF COLORADO)

This soup is another creation of my husband, Stephen's. He is a poet and grew up in Colorado, thus the name. The beauty of this soup is that it just sort of cooks itself – no fussing involved.

Ingredients

- 4 scallions, chopped
- 2 cups kale, chopped
- 2 medium zucchini, cut into ¼" cubes
- 1 cup frozen whole kernel corn
- 8 ounces chopped okra
- ½ cup brown rice
- 16 cups water
- 4 tablespoons tomato paste
- 3 tablespoons Better Than Bouillon vegetable soup base
- 2 tablespoons (heaping) dried basil
- 1 tablespoon lemon pepper
- 3 tablespoons flour

Directions

In a large stock pot, combine all of the above ingredients, except the flour. Bring to a boil. Gradually whisk in the flour.

Reduce heat to low and continue to cook until the rice is soft, about 30 to 40 minutes.

THE SOUP OF THE SMILING PALMS



This soup is one of my husband's creations. I have to admit I was a bit skeptical when my husband placed a bowl of soup in front of me that had pineapple in it. But, to my surprise, this soup turned out to be one of my new favorites.

Ingredients

- 1 20 ounce can chunk pineapple in juice (keep the juice)
- 1 19 ounce can coconut milk
- 1 15 ounce can straw mushrooms
- 1 20 ounce can water chestnuts (leave whole, slice, or dice)
- 1 13 ounce jar bamboo shoots in chili oil

Directions

This couldn't be simpler. Simply put all the ingredients into a large pot. Bring to a soft boil, and then reduce heat to low and simmer. Continue to simmer for 15 minutes. Serve with a side of brown rice.

TORTILLA SOUP

The recipe is a shout out to my favorite chef (besides my husband of course), Gregorio. Gregorio makes the best Sopa Azteca, and it is was one of those foods that I missed when I became a vegetarian. This is my version, minus the chicken. Cheers to Gregorio for the inspiration!

Ingredients

- 1 dried New Mexico chili pepper
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano leaves
- 1 teaspoon lime zest
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 14 ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 28 ounce can tomatoes, including juice
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- 1 can (4.5 ounce) mild green chilies, drained
- 2 cups whole kernel corn, thawed if frozen
- 3 tortillas, preferably corn, cut into 1 inch strips
- Canola oil
- 1 to 2 avocados cut into ½ inch cubes
- Queso Fresco cheese (mozzarella will work too)
- Finely chopped red onion
- Finely chopped cilantro

Directions

Soak the chili peppers in boiling water for 30 minutes. Drain and discard the stem and soaking water. Set aside.

In a dry skillet, over medium heat, toast the cumin seeds until they release their aroma and just begin to turn brown. Transfer to a mortar or spice grinder and grind coarsely. Set aside.

In the same skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add the onion to the pan and cook, stirring, until softened. Add garlic, cumin, oregano, lime zest, salt and pepper, and the New Mexico chili and cook, stirring for about 1 minute. Transfer mixture to a food

processor along with the beans and 1 cup of tomatoes and liquid, and process until smooth.

Transfer to a slow cooker. Add vegetable stock. Cover and cook on Low for 8 to 10 hours, or on High for 3 to 4 hours, until mixture is bubbling and flavors are combined. Stir in the green chilis and corn. Cover and cook on High for 15 to 20 minutes, until corn is tender.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Brush the tortilla strips with oil, place on baking sheet and bake for 4 minutes per side, until crisp and golden.

To serve: ladle soup into bowls, lay tortillas strips across the surface and top with queso fresco (the more the better in my opinion), avocado, red onion, and cilantro.

The tortillas and cheese will find their way to the bottom of the bowl, creating a wonderful gooey treat. The coolness of the avocado in the hot broth is another wonderful treat.

VEGETARIAN CHILI

Long before I became a vegetarian, I preferred my chili to be meatless. Over the years I have tried many different versions of meatless chili. I made this recipe for my mother after she returned home following her recovering from heart surgery. She gave it two thumbs up, as do I.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 ½ cups celery, diced small
- 1 ½ cups red pepper, diced small (you could use green)
- 1 medium onion, diced small
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 28 ounce cans whole (cut up) or diced tomatoes
- 2 15 ounce cans black beans, drained (or other bean of your liking)
- 1 4 ounce can diced green chili peppers, drained
- ¼ cup vinegar
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2-3 tablespoons hot pepper sauce
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried basil, crushed
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano, crushed
- 1 ½ teaspoons cumin
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 bay leaf

Directions

In a large stock pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Sauté the celery, pepper, onion and garlic until just tender.

Add the remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for about an hour, allowing all the flavors to blend together.

CHAPTER 3: SANDWICHES and the like



Grilled Portabella Sandwich

Grilled Vegetable Sandwich

Veggie Hummus Wrap

Falafel

Crabless Crabcake Sammies

Barbeque Boca Pita

Sloppy Joes

Pear Panini

Puff Pastry with Ricotta Cheese and Broccoli

GRILLED PORTABELLA SANDWICH



The grilled portabella is the burger of the vegetarian world – may I say, even better! The marinade is the perfect combination of oil, vinegar and spices. Couple this with a big, hearty portabella cap, and you will be in culinary heaven.

Ingredients

- 8 portabella mushroom caps, stems removed
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 8 slices provolone cheese

Directions

In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, basil, oregano, garlic, salt and pepper.

Place mushroom caps in a shallow pan, smooth side up. Pour the marinade over the mushrooms. Flip over and brush marinade on the gills. Let mushrooms marinate for at least 20-30 minutes.

Preheat grill on medium high heat.

Place the mushrooms on the grill, gill side down. Grill for about 5 minutes, then turn over and grill for another 5 minutes. Just before taking the mushroom caps off the grill, top with a slice of provolone cheese, and leave on the grill just long enough to melt the cheese.

To serve: Place on a whole wheat bun. Top with diced tomato and red onion. These are great served with some sweet potato fries and coleslaw.

Variation: Substitute blue cheese for the provolone (the blue cheese would be added after taking the mushrooms off the grill).

GRILLED VEGETABLE SANDWICH



I first created this recipe in response to a need for a replacement for grilled burgers in the summer time. I prefer to make this on the grill, but have also used a Panini press or Foreman grill inside during the winter months. This sandwich is a hit every time I make it. The secret: fresh ingredients and the pesto goat cheese spread.

Ingredients

- 1 loaf Ciabatta bread, sliced into 3-4 inch wide slices – and then sliced in half (or whole grain bun)
- 2 sweet red peppers (orange or yellow would be fine as well)
- 1 small eggplant
- 2 medium yellow onions
- 4 ounces goat cheese
- 4 ounces basil pesto
- 2-3 tablespoons sundried tomatoes (packed in oil) – chopped
- Fresh spinach or arugula (or other leafy green)
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Directions

Preheat grill or panini press.

Prep the vegetables: Slice the peppers in half and remove seeds. Slice the eggplant into ½ inch thick slices (plan on 2 slices per sandwich). Slice the onions into ½ inch slices. Lay the peppers, eggplant and onions on a baking sheet and brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and a generous amount of black pepper.

Place the vegetables on the hot grill for about 3-4 minutes per side. When I use a press I prepare the vegetables in shifts. When each is done, place it on a baking sheet in a 250 degree oven to keep warm while you are preparing the rest.

While the vegetables are grilling, prepare the cheese spread. In a small bowl, combine the goat cheese, pesto and sundried tomatoes. Set aside.

To assemble: Spread a generous amount of the goat cheese spread over the bottom half of the ciabatta bread slice. Add a layer of spinach. Then layer half a pepper, two slices eggplant, and a generous amount of grilled onions. Complete by spreading the goat cheese spread over the top slice of bread and place on top of the vegetables.

Feel free to try a variety of vegetables such as zucchini, summer squash, and various varieties of eggplant. Feta cheese also makes a great substitute for goat cheese as it also lends a lovely tanginess to the sandwich.

VEGGIE HUMMUS WRAP

Simple and nutritious!

Ingredients

1 12 inch flour tortilla
1/3 cup hummus – see recipes below
Handful of fresh spinach
1 Roma tomato, diced
½ sweet bell pepper (red, orange, or yellow), diced
Alfalfa sprouts

Directions

Wrap the tortilla in a towel and microwave for 10-15 seconds to make it more pliable.

Spread the hummus over the tortilla.

Add the veggies.

Roll up and eat.

Feel free to use whatever veggies are in your kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

HUMMUS



Hummus, put simply, is a bean dip. If you've tried the store bought hummus and found it not to your liking, I would encourage you to try these recipes. I know they will change your mind about hummus.

Here are a couple of my favorites to get you started.

Traditional Hummus

Ingredients

1 15 ounce can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
2 cloves garlic
4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons tahini (sesame paste which is generally found by the olives & relishes)
1 teaspoon salt
Black pepper to taste
2 -3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

Directions

Place all of the ingredients in a food processor (or blender) and blend until smooth. To get a smoother consistency, drizzle in water, a tablespoon at a time, while blending until it reaches your desired consistency.

Italian Red Feta Hummus

Ingredients

1 15 ounce can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
½ cup roasted red pepper (from a jar)
1 teaspoon dried basil
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
4 ounces tomato basil feta cheese
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

Directions

Place all of the ingredients in a food processor (or blender) and blend until smooth. There will be bits of feta in the hummus, so don't worry. Chill for several hours or overnight to let the flavors blend. This is also great served warm.

FALAFEL



Falafel – kind of a funny sounding word, isn't it? So what is it? In a nutshell, falafel is a chickpea patty. It might not sound all that great to some, but trust me, it is quite a treat. Falafel is a Middle-Eastern dish, thought to have first been eaten by the Egyptians. Basically, it is mashed chickpeas made into a ball or patty and fried in oil. The Middle-Eastern seasonings are the key to its flavor. Falafel is often served in a pita or on a roll with some veggies and a yogurt sauce.

Ingredients

- 1 15 ounce can chickpeas (garbanzo beans) drained and rinsed
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 generous tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup fine bread crumbs (I prefer Panko)
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup water

For Cucumber-Yogurt Sauce

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup diced seedless cucumber
- 1/4 cup minced red onion
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

Directions

In a food processor, pulse the beans, onion and garlic until it forms a coarse consistency. Add in the cumin, turmeric, baking powder, bread crumbs and salt and pepper and pulse a few more times.

Remove from the food processor and place in a bowl. Add the parsley and mix in with your hands. I leave this out of the food processor because it turns the patties green. If you don't mind the green patties, you can certainly add the parsley while in the food processor.

Slowly add the water until the mixture sticks together. You may have to add more or less to get just the right consistency.

Form the mixture into little balls or patties (about 3 inches in diameter).

In a large skillet, heat canola oil on very high heat. Use enough oil to really coat the bottom of the pan well. You want the oil to be very hot because you want to create a crisp, crunchy coating. Once the patties are formed, place them in the hot oil, and fry for about 4-5 minutes per side. Don't give in to the temptation to move them around and check on them a lot. You want them to sit in the oil and get a nice crust on them, which won't happen if you start moving them around.

When they are done, remove from the pan and place on paper towel to absorb the extra oil. If you'd like, you can sprinkle them with a little sea salt.

To prepare the Cucumber-Yogurt Sauce, combine all four ingredients and stir until well blended.

To serve: Traditionally, falafel is served in a pita with veggies and a yogurt sauce. They can also be served on a soft bun, or simply eaten on their own with a salad and a side of rice or quinoa.

CRABLESS CRABCAKE SAMMIES

This is my take on crab cakes – minus the crab. After having made falafel, I decided that chickpeas would also be a great vehicle to make the crab cakes I had been missing. After studying multiple crab cake recipes I went to work experimenting with chickpeas. The result is the recipe below.

Ingredients

16 ounces cooked chickpeas
8 buttery crackers, finely crushed
1 organic cage free egg, beaten
6 scallions, diced
2 tablespoons mayo
1 teaspoon dry mustard or 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
½ teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
Pinch of salt and pepper
½ lemon, juiced

Directions

In a food processor, pulse the beans until it forms a coarse, pasty consistency. Be careful not to over process.

In a separate bowl, combine the remaining ingredients. Add in the beans and gently mix only enough to combine the ingredients. Refrigerate for about an hour.

Shape the batter into patties about 3 inches in diameter.

Heat 2-3 tablespoons canola oil in a skillet over medium high heat. Sauté until golden brown, about 4-5 minutes per side. Resist the temptation to move them around and check on them a lot. You need them to sit in the oil and get a nice crust on them, which won't happen if you start moving them around. To prevent overcrowding in the pan, prepare in batches. Once they are browned, place briefly on a paper towel and then onto a baking sheet and keep warm in a 250 degree oven.

To serve: place on a whole grain bun with lettuce, tomato and tartar sauce. They can also be served without the bun; served very simply with a salad.

BARBEQUE BOCA PITA



This recipe was originally a camping creation made to feed my hungry guys after a long and enjoyable day of kayaking and camping. It is incredibly simple and so delicious. Best of all, you don't have to go camping to enjoy it!

Ingredients

1 large onion, chopped in chunks
2 tablespoons canola oil
Boca Burgers (a couple of burgers per person, depending on how big their appetites are)
18 ounce jar barbeque sauce (your favorite brand)
Pita pockets

Directions

Heat the canola oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until it starts to soften. I like my onion to have some crunch to it, so I don't sauté very long, just 1-2 minutes.

Next, break the Boca burgers into chunky pieces and add to the onions. Cook over medium high heat until browned and cooked through. Boca burgers can get a little dry, so feel free to add additional oil if needed.

Pour in the barbeque sauce and stir to combine with the burger/onion mixture. You can use as much, or as little sauce as you would like. Let simmer for 5-10 minutes.

Scoop the barbeque into a pita pocket, and serve. This makes a great meal served with some fresh chopped garden vegetables with a light dressing.

SLOPPY JOES

These are not your normal sloppy joes. I love sloppy joes, so I needed to figure out a way to give them a makeover. The secret ingredient: portabella mushrooms.

Ingredients

- 16 ounces portabella mushrooms, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 8 ounces tomato sauce
- ¼ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup barbeque sauce
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce – vegetarian
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

Directions

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the celery, onions, and red pepper. Add a pinch of salt and pepper and sauté for 3-4 minutes, until slightly softened. Then add the mushrooms with another pinch of salt and pepper and sauté an additional 4-5 minutes. Add the tomato paste, combine well and allow to cook for an additional minute.

In a small bowl combine the remaining ingredients. Stir into the mushroom mixture. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, allowing all the flavors to blend.

Serve on your favorite whole grain bun with a side of cole slaw or sweet potato fries.

PEAR PANINI

This recipe was inspired by the abundance of pears in our home as a result of an FFA fundraiser. What does one do with a full case of pears? Get creative in the kitchen!

Ingredients

2 slices of bread of your choosing per sandwich
Olive oil
1 pear, sliced thin
1 slice Brie
Pesto
Walnuts (caramelized)

Directions

Preheat the panini machine. You can also use a Foreman grill and a good old fashion fry pan. Brush the bread on both sides with olive oil and place in a single layer on the Panini press. Allow to brown, about 3 to 4 minutes.

To put the sandwich together, spread each slice of bread with about a tablespoon of pesto. Next add a layer of pear slices. Top this with a slice of brie (or other cheese of your liking) and a layer of walnuts. Add the top slice of bread and return to the Panini press, or fry pan.

(If you are using a fry pan, lightly coat the fry pan with olive oil and place another pan or heavy object on top to weight down the sandwich. Flip after 3-4 minutes to brown evenly on both sides).

This sandwich is great with a hot bowl of your favorite soup, or a simple salad.

PUFF PASTRY with RICOTTA CHEESE and BROCCOLI

Ingredients

Pie dough (I use Pillsbury pie dough – enough for 2 crusts)
2 cups ricotta cheese
1 clove garlic, minced
½ small onion, minced
1 ½ cups broccoli, blanched and diced small
1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
Pinch of salt
Pinch of black pepper
Mozzarella cheese
1 organic cage-free egg, lightly whisked

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

In a medium bowl, mix together the ricotta cheese, garlic, onion, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Set aside.

Roll out the pie dough and cut circles/rounds approximately 5-6 inches in diameter. As you cut each circle, take the remaining dough, form into a ball and roll out again until you have made all the 5-6 inch pastry rounds you can.

Divide that ricotta cheese mixture among the pastry rounds, placing it on one half of the circle. Next, fold the pastry rounds in half, creating half moons. Dampen the inside of the seam where the pastry edges come together. Roll the edges, or crimp to form a seal.

Place each pastry on a baking sheet. Cut vent slits into the top of each pastry. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush the top of each pastry with the whisked egg.

Bake for 20 minutes, or until pastry is golden brown.

CHAPTER 4: MEATLESS MAINS FIT FOR A QUEEN



Not So Fishy Tacos

Swiss Chard Enchiladas

Spaghetti Squash with Marinara Sauce

Eggplant Parmesan with Angel Hair Pasta

Greens and Cheese Stuffed Pasta Shells

Eggplant Roll Ups

Pad Thai

Parmesan Summer Squash Spaghetti

Pesto and Cherry Tomato Pasta

Rustic Broccoli and Mushroom Rotinni with Pine Nuts

Kale and Pepper Pasta with Feta Cheese

Steve's Red Beans and Rice

Black Bean Taco Bake

Black Bean Tostadas

Quinoa Stuffed Zucchini Boats

Spanakopita (Greek Spinach Pie)

Vegetable Stir Fry with Hoisin Sauce

Veggie Potato Shepherd's Pie

NOT SO FISHY TACOS

This recipe is my take on fish tacos. The difference – no fish had to die. As a reformed fish murderer (as my brother calls me), this recipe is particularly close to my heart, as it was a fishing incident that started me on my journey as a vegetarian.

Ingredients

- 1 14 ounce package organic non-GMO extra firm tofu
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or canola oil
- 8 taco size flour or corn tortillas
- Cilantro, chopped
- Zesty cilantro slaw (see recipe below)
- Salsa – use your personal favorite
- Sour cream

Directions

Press the excess water out of the tofu. There are a couple of ways to press out the excess water. My preferred method is to use a tofu press which you can purchase online. If you don't have a tofu press, simply drain off the excess water, wrap the tofu in a couple of sheets of paper towel and wrap with a cloth towel. Press to absorb the excess water. Unwrap and repeat with a dry paper towel. Set on a plate or cutting board with a weighted object on top. Allow to sit for a minimum of 15 minutes. Cut the tofu into ½ inch cubes.

Marinating the tofu: Combine one tablespoon oil, lime juice, garlic, cilantro, chili powder and cayenne pepper in a bowl. Add the cubed tofu and gently toss to coat the tofu. Cover and refrigerate for at least a couple of hours.

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add the tofu. Do not overcrowd the tofu in the pan. If needed, prepare in two batches. The trick to creating a crispy crust is to leave the tofu alone in the pan. I have learned this the hard way and ended up with a pan of broken up, not browned tofu mush. Allow to brown on each side for 3-4 minutes. Once browned, remove from pan and set aside.

At our house I set everything out like a taco bar, so while the tofu is browning, you can get the other items set up. You may have noticed that I didn't specify how much

cilantro, slaw, salsa, or sour cream you need. I have done this intentionally as the amount you will need is based on your personal preference.

Heat a griddle or large fry pan for the tortillas. Heat the tortillas for about 30 seconds per side. I like to leave mine on slightly longer until they get a little color and bubble up a bit. I think it adds a little texture and some extra flavor!

To assemble: In your tortilla, place 4-5 pieces of tofu and top with slaw, sour cream, salsa and cilantro. Feel free to add to or leave something out based on your personal preference. Guacamole salsa would be a great topping as well.

ZESTY CILANTRO SLAW

Ingredients

½ a Napa Cabbage, shredded thinly (green or red cabbage would work, too)
½ a red onion, diced
2-3 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
1-2 tablespoons poblano pepper, diced
Juice of ½ a lime
1-2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil or substitute 2 tablespoons mayo
Generous pinch of ground cumin (about ¼ teaspoon)
Salt – couple of generous pinches
Pinch of black pepper

Directions

In a medium bowl, combine all the ingredients. Cover and refrigerate. Allow the mixture to sit and marinate for at least 30 minutes, allowing all the flavors an opportunity to blend.

Variations: When making the slaw, I make two versions; one with the olive oil and the other with the mayo. It is less work than it sounds. Just combine all the ingredients for the slaw (doubling the amount), leaving out the oil or mayo until the end. Then divide the slaw mixture in two – add oil to one and mayo to the other. This works well in our home to meet our personal taste preferences.

SWISS CHARD ENCHILADAS



I know what some of you are thinking, Swiss chard sounds too healthy to taste good. But the truth is, chard does taste quite yummy!

When Swiss chard is young and tender, it is great in salads. However, as it matures, it becomes tougher and can have a more bitter flavor. For this recipe, we will be using mature chard.

When the mature chard is used, the leafy green portion is removed from the stems. To deal with the tougher stem, we will just be cooking it longer, and then later adding the leaves.

Ingredients

- 2 8 ounce cans green enchilada sauce
- 1-2 jalapenos, minced – seeds removed
- 2 large bunches of Swiss chard – (you could substitute kale or spinach)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 8 flour tortillas
- 8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- ¼ cup fresh Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 large handful cilantro, chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt

Directions

Prepare the chard by removing the leaves from the stems. Chop the stems into small pieces, rinse thoroughly, and set aside. Cut the leaves into ribbons, and again, rinse and set aside.

In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over high heat. Add the onion and sauté for about 1 minute. Then add the chard stems and cook for another minute. Next, add the chard leaves. Add ¼ cup water and 1 tsp salt, cover and reduce heat to low. Cook for 10-15 minutes, until tender. Then remove the lid and cook off any remaining moisture. (We don't want watery enchiladas!)

In a bowl, combine the Monterey Jack cheese, the chard/onion mixture, and the cilantro.

In another bowl, mix the enchilada sauce and the desired amount of jalapeno.

Now to put it all together...

Heat oven to 375 degrees.

Scoop about 1 cup of the enchilada sauce into a 9 x 13 inch casserole dish, coating the bottom. This will help to keep the enchiladas from sticking.

Take each tortilla and dip it in the remaining enchilada sauce one at a time. Lay it in the casserole dish, and fill it with about ¼ cup of the cheese/chard mixture. Roll up and place seam side down in the casserole dish. Repeat this for all the tortillas.

Pour the remaining enchilada sauce over top of the enchiladas. Sprinkle with another couple of ounces of Monterey and Parmesan Cheese.

Bake for 25 minutes, until it bubbles on the sides and the cheese is melted.

Take out of the oven, and sprinkle with additional cilantro for garnish.

Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Serving size: 2 enchiladas.

Serving suggestions: You could serve with light salad, or you could serve this with tortilla chips, your favorite salsa or pico de gallo, and some guacamole.

SPAGHETTI SQUASH with MARINARA SAUCE

Spaghetti squash is a great substitute for pasta. If you are trying to eat a little healthier and lower your calories, but aren't quite ready for spaghetti squash, try combining the pasta and the squash 50/50. Once you are accustomed to that, gradually add more squash and less pasta. I have to admit that since I have not always been a great fan of squash, I was reluctant to replace my pasta. The key for me was to jazz up the squash with some garlic, and of course serve with a fresh marinara sauce.

Ingredients

1 large spaghetti squash
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper
2 cloves garlic, minced
Marinara sauce (see recipe in "Salads, Sides, & Sauces")

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Cut the squash in half lengthwise. Remove the seeds.

Drizzle each half with 2 tablespoons olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add 1 clove minced garlic to each squash half and rub in gently.

Place the squash cut side down on a baking sheet and bake for 30-40 minutes.

While the squash is baking, prepare the marinara sauce.

Remove the squash from the oven and let cool 10-20 minutes so it will be easier to handle.

Once it is cool enough to handle, pull a fork lengthwise through the flesh to separate it into long spaghetti strands.

To serve: place a serving of squash on plate and top with marinara sauce. Serve with steamed vegetables or a simple green salad.

EGGPLANT PARMESAN with ANGEL HAIR PASTA

I absolutely love eggplant parmesan. However, I really wanted to create a healthier version without sacrificing the flavor and texture. To accomplish this, I baked the eggplant in the oven instead of frying. All I can say is YUM!

Ingredients

- 1 large eggplant
- 2 organic, cage free eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 ½ cups bread crumbs (panko works well, but I recommend making your own*)
- 3-4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- Marinara Sauce (see recipe in “Salads, Sides, & Sauces”)
- Fresh mozzarella cheese
- Angel hair pasta

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly oil baking sheet using olive or canola oil. Set aside.

Slice the eggplant into eight (1/2 inch thick) slices.

Place the lightly beaten eggs in a shallow dish.

In a separate dish, combine the bread crumbs, Parmesan, oregano, basil & garlic. (Before adding the herbs you should crush them. You can do this in your hands, or with a mortar & pestle. Crushing the fibers of the herbs releases their essential oils and will provide a greater depth of flavor).

Dip the eggplant slices first in the eggs, then in the breadcrumb mixture and coat thoroughly with the breadcrumbs. Place on the baking sheet.

Bake for 15 minutes, then turn over and bake for an additional 15 minutes – until they are golden brown.

While the eggplant is baking, prepare the marinara sauce. When there is about 5-6 minutes of bake time left for the eggplant; prepare your angel hair pasta to al dente per package directions.

Remove the eggplant from the oven. Top each slice of eggplant with 2-3 tablespoons of marinara sauce and a thin slice of fresh mozzarella. Return to the oven and bake for an additional 5-10 minutes until the cheese has melted.

To serve: Plate pasta topped with marinara sauce and two slices of eggplant on the side.

*Note: How to make bread crumbs. Simply place dry (not stale) bread slices in a food processor and pulse until it becomes bread crumbs. If you don't have dry bread, simply take the bread and place it in a 300 degree oven for about 15 minutes, turning over halfway through so they dry evenly. Let cool before placing in the food processor.

GREENS and CHEESE STUFFED PASTA SHELLS



Greens are nutritional powerhouses, rich in vital vitamins, minerals, and of course fiber. This recipe is a great way to sneak some greens into your kid's diets (and our own). I use the term "greens" in this recipe because of the flexibility of substituting the "greens" of your choosing (spinach, Swiss chard, kale, or even broccoli).

Ingredients

12-14 jumbo pasta shells
10 ounces of greens
2 cups cottage cheese, drained
2 organic, cage free egg whites
4 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
2-3 tablespoons fresh Parmesan cheese, grated
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
Black pepper to taste
Marinara sauce – about 2-3 cups (see recipe in "Salads, Sides, & Sauces")

Directions

Prepare pasta shells according to package directions, drain and cover with cold water so they don't dry out.

If using frozen spinach, chard or kale: once the greens are thawed, drain thoroughly. I like to squeeze out the extra water in my hand or in a hand towel.

If using fresh greens, sauté in a large skillet over medium heat with 1 tablespoons olive oil until wilted, about 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

In a medium bowl, combine the greens, cottage cheese, Parmesan cheese, mozzarella, egg whites, garlic powder and pepper.

In a 9 x 13 inch baking dish, pour 1 cup of marinara sauce to coat the bottom.

Stuff the greens/cheese mixture into the shells and place in the baking dish. Cover with the remaining marinara sauce.

Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 45 minutes – or until bubbling.

Serving size: 3-4 stuffed shells. These are so yummy I guarantee you will want to eat them all by yourself!

To serve: Place on a plate with some crusty bread and a light salad.

EGGPLANT ROLL UPS

This recipe was created as I was trying to find ways to use vegetables in place of pasta or bread. The result is this Italian dish that is low on carbs, yet big on taste.

Ingredients

2 medium eggplant, sliced lengthwise into 4 slices (1/4-1/2 inch thick) for a total of 8 slices
2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 cups marinara sauce (see recipe in "Salads, Sides & Sauces")
1 small onion, diced
1 1/2-2 cups broccoli, zucchini, or spinach, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped
3/4 cup ricotta cheese
1/4 cup fresh parmesan cheese
1 organic cage-free egg
Generous pinch of salt
Generous pinch of black pepper

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Prepare the marinara or red sauce per recipe directions.

While the marinara sauce is cooking, place the sliced eggplant on a baking sheet (you could try zucchini as well – we all know there is always plenty of it to be used up!). Brush both sides with olive oil. Bake for 20 minutes, flipping them half way through. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium high heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Add the diced broccoli and sauté for an additional 2 minutes. Remove from heat to cool.

In a separate bowl, combine the parsley, ricotta and parmesan cheeses, egg, salt and pepper. Once cooled, add the broccoli mixture and combine.

To make the roll ups: lay a slice of eggplant on a flat surface. Place about 2 tablespoons of the cheese mixture at one end and roll up. Repeat for each slice of eggplant.

Place ¼ cup of marinara sauce in an 8"x 8" baking dish to coat the bottom. Place each of the roll ups in the baking dish with the seam side down – in the same manner you would when making enchiladas – creating a single layer. Pour the remaining marinara sauce over top. Sprinkle with an additional ¼ cup Parmesan cheese. Bake in a 350 degree oven about 20-30 minutes; until the sauce is bubbly and the cheese is browned.

To serve: place two eggplant rollups on a plate and serve with a side of steamed vegetables or a simple green salad.

PAD THAI

Pad Thai is hands down my favorite Thai dish. I first had it at a little hole in the wall place where I live, also called Pad Thai, and it was love at first bite. I have eaten Pad Thai at many other Thai restaurants over the years, and each is slightly different from the rest. But time after time, I come back to the original dish I was served as my favorite.

I have tried to recreate this dish in my own home many times, mostly failing miserably. But after all those failed attempts, I have finally created a recipe that comes mighty close to the dish I was originally served. I hope you enjoy this as much as I."

Ingredients

- 12 ounce package of rice noodles
- 14 ounce package of organic, non-GMO extra firm tofu
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- ½ cup white sugar
- ½ cup white vinegar
- ¼ cup Golden Mountain Seasoning Sauce (found at your local Asian market)
- 2 tablespoons Tamarind paste (found at your local Asian market – be sure to get the paste. If the paste is not available, the dehydrated form will work, just rehydrate before using)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 4 organic, cage-free eggs
- 1 ½ teaspoon white sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup peanuts, ground
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 3-4 scallions cut on the diagonal
- Mung bean sprouts (optional)

Directions

Soak the rice noodles for 30-60 minutes in a bowl of room temperature water. Make sure they are thoroughly soaked. If they are not, when you add them to the sauce later, they will soak up too much sauce and your Pad Thai will be very dry.

Press the excess water out of the tofu and cut into 1 inch square pieces. There are a couple of ways to press out the excess water. My preferred method is to use a tofu press which you can purchase online. If you don't have a tofu press, simply drain off the excess water, wrap the tofu in a couple of sheets of paper towel and wrap with a cloth towel. Press to absorb the excess water. Unwrap and repeat with a dry paper towel. Set on a plate or cutting board with a weighted object (such as a heavy skillet) on top. Allow to sit for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add the tofu, sprinkle with a pinch of black pepper, and brown on all sides. The trick to this is to leave the tofu alone in the pan. I have learned this the hard way and ended up with a pan of broken up, not browned tofu mush. Once browned, remove from pan and set aside.

In a saucepan, combine the ½ cup sugar, vinegar, Golden Mountain Seasoning Sauce, and tamarind paste. Bring to a simmer, but don't allow to reduce down.

In a separate pan, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for about 1 minute – just until fragrant. Do not allow the garlic to get too hot as it will burn and taste bitter. Add the eggs and scramble. When the eggs are done, add the rice noodles and stir. Add the sauce, 1 ½ tablespoon sugar, salt, paprika, and the peanuts and gently combine.

To serve: Place the Pad Thai on a warm plate and top with scallions, bean sprouts, and a few extra peanuts.

PARMESAN SUMMER SQUASH SPAGHETTI



This dish is inspired by my friend's daughter, Lindsey who likes to make pasta and simply add some Parmesan cheese to it (and maybe a little butter too). Thanks for the inspiration Lindsey. To put my own twist on it, I simply added some summer squash. This is a quick and simple dish to prepare, and a great way to use up all the summer squash that is so abundant all summer long.

Ingredients

1 package thin spaghetti
Summer squash, cut into half moon pieces (1 squash per serving)
Extra virgin olive oil
Butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
Pinch each of salt and pepper
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

Prepare the spaghetti to al dente.

While the pasta is cooking, prepare the summer squash. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1 tablespoon butter. Add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes. Be careful not to get the pan too hot which could cause your garlic to burn. Add the summer squash and season with salt and pepper. Sauté for 5-7 minutes, just long enough to cook through, but still be tender crisp. Do not let it overcook, as you will end up with mushy squash. To help you to not overcook the squash, wait to prepare the squash until the pasta is on its last five minutes of cooking.

Once the pasta is cooked, drain and put back in the pot. Add an additional tablespoon of butter to the pasta. Add the summer squash and a couple of very generous handfuls of Parmesan cheese and gently combine.

PESTO and CHERRY TOMATO PASTA

This is one of the easiest pasta recipes you will ever make! It is a great go to weeknight meal when you are just too darn tired to put much thought or effort into cooking. I especially like this recipe during the summer months when the ingredients are fresh and in abundance.

Ingredients

¼ cup pecorino cheese, grated (or parmigiano reggiano)
2 handfuls baby arugula (could substitute with spinach)
1 handful basil
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/3 cup walnuts
Juice of 1 lemon
Several handfuls cherry tomatoes
½ pound whole grain penne pasta – I like Barilla for the higher protein content.
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Prepare the pasta al dente.

Put all the other ingredients (except the tomatoes and salt/pepper) in a blender or food processor, and blend until thick and smooth.

Season with salt and pepper.

Cut the cherry tomatoes in half.

Mix the pesto and the cherries into the pasta and serve.

Now didn't I tell you this was the easiest recipe ever!

To serve: Scoop onto plate and sprinkle with additional cheese if you would like. Serve with some crusty bread and a salad and you are good to go.

RUSTIC BROCCOLI and MUSHROOM ROTINI with PINE NUTS



If you are looking for a quick, easy and healthy meal, you need look no further. With all the business that life brings (work, kids, family, and of course making time for fun) this dish will get you in and out of the kitchen quickly.

I must give kudos to my husband Stephen, as he is the creator of this great dish. I was a little skeptical when he started throwing this together, but it turned out wonderfully. I don't know why I was skeptical, as he is a fantastic cook. Great job honey!

Ingredients

8 ounces veggie Rotini pasta
Broccoli tops – about 2 small heads
8 ounces baby portabella mushrooms
2/3 cup pine nuts
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
5 cloves garlic, minced
2-3 leaves fresh tarragon, chopped
4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
1/3 teaspoon sea salt
Black pepper to taste

Directions

Prepare the pasta according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, heat the oil over medium high heat. Add the garlic, mushrooms, salt and pepper and cook for 6-8 minutes. Add the broccoli and pine nuts, and cook for another 3-4 minutes (until the broccoli is tender crisp).

Drain the pasta and return to the pot. Add the feta cheese and tarragon, and gently combine.

To serve: place a serving of pasta on the plate and scoop the broccoli and mushroom mixture over top. Sprinkle with extra tarragon if desired.

KALE and PEPPER PASTA with FETA CHEESE



This recipe is so easy that my teenager and his friend were able to whip this up (with a little coaching from me). It is a hit in our house every time we make it. To increase the protein content, be sure to look at the nutritional labels on the pasta box and choose one that has a higher protein content. Barilla Plus is one option.

Ingredients

- 1 8 ounce package farfalle (bow tie) pasta (or other pasta)
- 1-2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium red pepper
- 1 medium orange pepper
- 1 medium yellow pepper
- 1 bunch roughly chopped kale, stems removed. (Spinach or chard would work too)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pinch of dried basil (or Italian seasoning)
- 1 pinch red pepper flakes (optional)
- 8 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

Directions

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook 8-10 minutes, to al dente and drain.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes, and allow to infuse the oil for 1-2 minutes. Watch carefully to ensure that the garlic does not brown and burn. Stir in the peppers and season with the basil and a pinch of salt and pepper. Cook the peppers for 3-5 minutes. You want the peppers to be tender crisp, so be careful not to overcook. Add in the kale, stir, and continue to cook until wilted down (about 1-2 minutes).

If you have room in your skillet, add in the pasta and gently combine. If not, you can toss the pasta and vegetables together in a large serving dish.

To serve: place pasta and veggies on a plate and top with feta cheese.

STEVE'S RED BEANS AND RICE

In the words of my husband, Steve, "this is a fast and easy recipe for someone who likes to eat like a pig." The recipe is even easier if you have a rice cooker.

Ingredients

1 ½ cups uncooked white rice
1 15 ounce can dark red kidney beans, do not drain
12 ounces Pace Mild Chunky Picante Sauce
3 tablespoons canola oil

Directions

Prepare rice per package directions.

In the same pot that you prepared the rice; add the beans, picante sauce and oil. Combine and allow to heat through. "Eat like a pig," says Steve.

BLACK BEAN TACO BAKE

The original version of this recipe was given to me by a coworker a few years ago. I have made some changes to the original recipe to make it meatless and it is now a family favorite. This recipe is super simple and makes a great weeknight meal! Enjoy.

Ingredients

- 1 15 ounce can black beans, undrained
- 1 15 ounce can pinto beans, undrained (or other beans of your liking)
- 1 package (1.25 oz.) taco seasoning
- ½ cup chunky salsa
- 1 cup Monterey, Cheddar or Mozzarella cheese (whatever you have on hand)
- 1 cup broken up tortilla chips
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 avocado, diced
- Sour cream, optional
- Jalapeno peppers, optional

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a skillet, combine beans, taco seasoning, and salsa and simmer for 10 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a 9" x 13" baking dish. Sprinkle on cheese and then the tortilla chips and place in the oven. Bake for 10 minutes, or until the cheese is melted.

Once out of the oven, top with tomatoes, onion, and avocado. You may also add a dollop of sour cream and some diced jalapenos if you would like.

Serves 4-6 people.

BLACK BEAN TOSTADAS

This is one of my family's favorite go to meals when we don't want to spend a lot of time in the kitchen. The variations are endless, making it fun for the kids who want to create their own personalized tostadas.

Ingredients

Here are the basics:

Tostada shells (found by the taco shells – they are like a hard taco shell - just flat and round).

Refried black or pinto beans (read the label to watch for animal fats – or make your own)

Sour cream

Salsa - red or green

Soft taco size tortillas (optional)

Toppings of your choosing, such as: diced onions, tomatoes, avocado, peppers, black olives, lettuce, cilantro.

Directions

Spread a thin layer of sour cream on a soft tortilla. Next place a crunchy tostada shell on top of the sour cream. This step is optional, but I like to use the soft tortilla under the crispy shell as it helps keep the tostada shell from breaking all over when you bite into it. If you don't like sour cream, or are watching your fat and calories you could use a layer of refried beans or guacamole.

Next, spread a layer of refried beans on the crispy tostada shell. Top with your favorite veggies and salsa. That's it! Enjoy.

QUINOA STUFFED ZUCCHINI BOATS



As the summer comes to an end, you may find that you still have quite an abundance of zucchini. You may also find that you have run out of ideas on how to prepare all that zucchini. You've probably already made zucchini cakes and breads, you've sautéed it, made stir fries, and you may have even put some in the freezer.

This is a new and fun way to prepare zucchini – Zucchini Boats! The kids will love making these, and I am a big believer in getting kids in the kitchen early on in life so they learn about and care about the food they are putting into their little bodies.

Ingredients

- 2 medium zucchini or summer squash
- 1 cup tomatoes, diced
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Generous handful of basil, chopped
- 1 ½ cups prepared quinoa*
- Red pepper flakes – to your level of spiciness
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ cup fresh Parmesan cheese, grated
- Feta cheese, crumbled

Directions

Prepare the quinoa per package directions and set aside.

Prepare the boats by cutting the zucchini lengthwise in half, and then carve out the pulp creating “boats.” This is the part the kids will love. Save the pulp and chop.

In a medium skillet, sauté the onion in 1-2 tablespoons oil with a dash of red pepper flakes for 3-4 minutes, until the onions start to become translucent. Then add the garlic and the zucchini pulp. Sauté for an additional 3-4 minutes, until most of the liquid from the zucchini is gone. Remove from the heat and add the tomatoes. Then add in the Parmesan cheese, quinoa and basil.

Next, scoop the quinoa mixture into each of the four boats and top with feta cheese. You know what I say about feta, "Everything is better with a little bit of feta!"

Now we are going to grill them to pull all the flavors together. Once your grill is preheated, grill the boats on medium-low heat for 15-20 minutes. You will know when they are done when they are tender when poked with a fork. Don't worry if they start to get charred on the bottom, as this will add a very lovely flavor to the dish. When removing from the grill be careful, as they will be a bit soft, so be sure to support their bottoms.

*Quinoa preparation: Be sure to check the package to determine if the quinoa you are using is prewashed or not. If it is not, be sure to rinse it thoroughly a couple of times before cooking with it. If it isn't rinsed it will have a very bitter flavor, and thus ruin the dish.

SPANAKOPITA (GREEK SPINACH PIE)

Spanakopita – Greek Spinach Pie. Now this is one tasty dish, and it is actually quite easy to make. If you have the time, go ahead and use fresh spinach as the recipe calls for. I find that the time I spend chopping veggies for my dishes can be a very relaxing, also meditative time for me in the kitchen. However, if you are short on time, or simply don't enjoy the fussiness of chopping the spinach, then by all means go ahead and use frozen chopped spinach.

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped small
- 1 bunch scallions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 pounds fresh spinach, rinsed and chopped
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 organic, cage free eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 8 sheets phyllo dough*
- Additional olive oil

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly oil a 9" x 9" baking pan.

In a large skillet, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Sauté the onion, scallions and garlic until softened and lightly browned. Add the spinach, parsley and nutmeg and continue to sauté until the spinach is wilted – about another 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

In a medium bowl, mix together the egg, ricotta cheese, and feta cheese. Then stir in the spinach mixture. Set aside.

Lay one sheet of the phyllo dough in the prepared baking pan and brush lightly with oil. The sheet of phyllo dough will be slightly bigger than your pan, causing some to hang over – which is desirable.

Lay another sheet of phyllo dough on top and brush with olive oil. Continue this with two more sheets of dough.

Next, spread the spinach and cheese mixture into the pan and fold overhanging dough over the filling. Brush the dough with oil.

Add 4 more sheets of dough in the same manner as above. Tuck the overhanging dough into the pan to create a seal.

Bake in a preheated oven for 30-40 minutes until golden brown. Serve hot.

*When working with phyllo dough, it is very important that you do not unwrap the dough, exposing it to the air until you are ready to use it. Phyllo dough is very, very thin, and when it is exposed to the air it will dry out very quickly, making it very difficult to work with.

VEGETABLE STIR FRY with HOISIN SAUCE



I was initially reluctant to cook with hoisin sauce, simply because it sounded too different and I wasn't familiar with it. I had seen it over and over on the store shelf by the other stir fry sauces, but always went back to the teriyaki sauce. That is until a friend told me he had tried it and really liked it. After reading many, many recipes and experimenting with it a bit, this recipe is what I came up with. It was a great hit at my house, and I'm sure it will be at yours as well. Feel free to use your own favorite vegetables, and if you really want to live on the edge, serve over pasta instead of rice.

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons agave nectar (or honey)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vegetable broth
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- 1 tablespoon corn starch
- 4-5 green onions, chopped
- 4 cups of vegetables of your choice (zucchini, peppers, summer squash, mushrooms, broccoli, etc)

Directions

In a small saucepan, over medium heat, combine the first nine ingredients. Let the mixture simmer for 5-7 minutes, until it thickens. Remove from heat and set aside.

Meanwhile, you should have your rice, quinoa, or pasta cooking.

When your rice/pasta is about 5 minutes from being done it is time to start the veggies.

Heat a large skillet (or wok if you have one) over very high heat. Add 1 tablespoon soy sauce and 1 tablespoon sesame oil. Add the vegetables and cook for 2-3 minutes. If you are using broccoli, I would recommend blanching it first for 2-3 minutes. This will give it a little head start as it takes longer to cook broccoli than the other veggies. Next, add the hoisin sauce mixture into the vegetables and stir to coat. Cook for another 2-3 minutes, being careful not to overcook your vegetables. To me there is nothing worse than mushy stir fry.

To serve: If you are using rice/quinoa; scoop a serving of the grain onto a plate and top with the vegetables. If you are using pasta; I would cook the noodle to al dente and then toss with the vegetables and sauce at the very end, stirring to coat the noodles.

VEGGIE POTATO SHEPARD'S PIE



The inspiration for this recipe came from an idea to make an upside down version of stew and mashed potatoes. Feel free to use whatever combination of vegetables you like, based on what you like and what you have in your kitchen.

Ingredients

2 to 2 ½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes (or type of your choosing)
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 onion, chopped
8 ounces white or baby bella mushrooms, cut into chunks
1 clove garlic, minced
3 large carrots, diced
2 sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
2 stalks celery, diced
1 cup green beans or peas
3 cups vegetable broth
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons corn starch
2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce

Directions

Cut the Yukon Gold potatoes into chunks. Place in a large pot, cover with water and add a couple pinches of salt. Cover and bring to a boil. Cook until the potatoes are fork tender. Drain. Mash the potatoes with a splash of milk, a couple tablespoons butter, and a handful of chopped chives.

While the potatoes cook you can work on the veggie filling.

Heat oil in a large skillet. Add onions, mushrooms and garlic and cook for 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add all of the other vegetables and the vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to low and simmer. Cook until the vegetables are just tender – about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

In a small bowl, stir together the corn starch, soy sauce and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water until the corn starch is completely dissolved. Then stir this into the vegetables and cook until the sauce thickens, about 3 minutes.

Scoop the vegetables into an 11" x 7" baking dish, or individual ramekins. Top the veggies with the mashed potatoes and place it in a 425 degree oven for 5-10 minutes. If you would like to brown up the top, simply beat an egg and brush over the top before putting the dish in the oven.

CHAPTER 5: SALADS, SIDES AND SAUCES



Mango Quinoa Salad

Daikon Cabbage Slaw

Mango and Black Bean Salad

Old Settlers Beans

Grilled Margheritta Zucchini

Garlicky Grilled Patty Pans

Veggie Kabobs

Quinoa with Basil and Pine Nuts

Grilled Tomatoes

Caramelized Cauliflower

Sautéed Spinach

Sweet Potato Fries

Marinara Sauce

Steve's Red Sauce

Mushroom Gravy

MANGO QUINOA SALAD

This salad is one of my all time summertime favorites. It's light on those hot summer days, and packed full of protein. If you don't have mangos, feel free to experiment with pineapple or peaches.

Ingredients

- 1 cup quinoa
- 1 14 ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 mangos, peeled and diced
- 6 green onions, sliced thin
- ½ cup cilantro, chopped
- 4 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil – extra virgin
- Juice of 1 lime
- Sea salt
- Black pepper

Directions

Prepare quinoa per package directions. Set aside to cool.

In a bowl, place the cooled quinoa, black beans, mango, green onion, and cilantro. In a separate small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, oil, and lime juice. Pour dressing over the salad. Add salt and pepper to taste and toss gently to combine. Chill before serving. I like to let this salad rest for a few hours if I have the time so that the flavors really get time to come together.

DAIKON CABBAGE SLAW

There are multiple versions of slaw and the following is mine. One of the twists to my version is the addition of daikon. Daikon, also referred to as the white radish, is a root vegetable with a very long root. It has a lovely mild peppery flavor and is thought to aid digestion and help the liver metabolize fat and protein. Now that is a win-win.

I also find it fun to change up the type of cabbage and carrots. For instance, if your child is reluctant to eat vegetables, change up the vegetables to match their school colors. For instance, use red cabbage (which is really purple) and leave out the carrots, and you have purple and white slaw. If your school colors are orange and white; or it is Halloween, use white cabbage with lots of carrots.

Ingredients

- 1 small to medium head of cabbage (red or white)
- 1 daikon root
- 1/2 small onion
- 2-3 carrots
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise (I prefer Hellman's)
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup skim milk
- 1/4 cup buttermilk
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 1/2 tablespoons white vinegar
- Pinch of salt and black pepper

Directions

In a food processor, or using a mandolin, shred the cabbage, daikon, onion and carrots. Set aside in a large bowl.

In a separate bowl, combine the mayo, sugar, both kinds of milk, lemon, vinegar, and salt and pepper and mix well, creating a dressing.

Pour the dressing over the cabbage mixture and mix well.

Refrigerate for several hours or overnight, allowing all the flavors to hang out together for a while.

MANGO and BLACK BEAN SALAD (or salsa)



Mango and black beans. What a perfect combination. This dish makes a great light salad and it is equally great served as a salsa with some dipping chips.

Ingredients

¼ cups extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
½ teaspoon sea salt
Black pepper to taste
1 15 ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
2 cups mango, diced
1 medium jicama, diced – about 2 cups
Half of a small red onion – about ½ cup, diced small

Directions

Whisk the oil, vinegar and cilantro together in a medium bowl until well blended. Add the beans, mango, jicama, onion, salt and pepper, and mix gently until well coated.

Chill before serving. I recommend chilling for several hours before serving to allow all the flavors to hang out and get acquainted.

OLD SETTLERS BEANS



This is an old recipe of my mother's that I decided needed a "redo." I loved this dish as a child, but decided the original recipe was loaded with way too much sugar, along with ground beef and bacon. It was time to make it meatless and cut down on the sugar. Both of my guys gave it two thumbs up, which means I can pass it along to you!

Ingredients

- 1 15 ounce can of kidney beans
- 1 15 ounce can butter beans
- 1 28 ounce can vegetarian baked beans (I like Bush's)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup agave
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ketchup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon yellow mustard
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 bag of "vegetarian meat crumbles." You could also use meatless burgers, such as Boca, and break them into pieces (optional).

Directions

Drain the three cans of beans. Put all of the ingredients into a slow cooker. Stir gently to combine. Cook on low for 3-4 hours, or until cooked through.

To serve: At our house we make this a main dish with a side of whole grain bread for dipping and a glass of milk. Of course it can also be served as a high protein side dish.

GRILLED MARGHERITTA ZUCCHINI



This is one of my favorite summer recipes. So simple, and yet another great way to prepare the abundance of fresh zucchini or summer squash all summer long.

Ingredients

Medium sized zucchini or yellow summer squash

Garden fresh Roma tomatoes, sliced thin

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Fresh Parmesan cheese, grated

Fresh basil, cut in ribbons (you can also use thyme, cilantro, rosemary, or other herb of your choosing)

Directions

Heat grill to medium heat.

Cut the zucchini lengthwise into planks about ¼ inch thick. Lay on a flat surface or tray. Make sure that the zucchini lay flat, or the toppings will slide off during the grilling.

Drizzle each plank with a small amount of olive oil. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Next, add 3 tomato slices per plank and sprinkle liberally with basil (or other herb).

Place each zucchini plank on the heated grill and cover the lid. Let them cook for about 8-10 minutes. Don't worry if the bottoms of your zucchini start to get charred. This is part of the flavoring that makes this dish so tasty!

You will know they are done when the zucchini are tender when poked with a fork. Be careful not to overcook, as the zucchini will become mushy. You want the zucchini to be tender crisp so they are able to support the toppings.

When removing from the grill, be sure to support the bottom. I recommend a long handled spatula. We wouldn't want all those yummy toppings to fall into the grill!

Serving size: 3 per person.

GARLICKY GRILLED PATTY PANS

I discovered patty pan squash at my local farmers market and couldn't resist bringing some home. I thought they were cute and interesting looking and would add some shapely interest to a plate of veggies. I decided to marinate and grill them and they turned out to be delish!

Ingredients

6 patty pan squash, cut in half horizontally
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ teaspoon salt
Pinch of coarsely ground black pepper

Directions

To prepare the marinade, mix together all the ingredients except for the patty pans. Place the patty pans on a tray, cut side up, and pour the marinade over top. Allow to sit for at least 20-30 minutes before grilling. If you have the time and are planning ahead, let them marinate longer as the flavors will be even better.

Place the patty pan on a hot grill. Grill for 4-5 minutes on each side. Don't grill too long or the patty pan will get soft and mushy, which is not desirable.

To serve: remove from the grill and serve with a side of grains (such as rice or quinoa).

VEGGIE KABOBS



Kabobs are a fun and easy way to get kids involved in the preparation of their own food. They can choose their veggies (and fruits) and help put them on the skewers, which personalizes them and increases the chances of them eating them. Sounds like a win/win to me.

Ingredients (for the marinade)

- 2 tablespoons honey
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped (or other herbs)
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

Vegetables: sweet peppers, zucchini or summer squash, mushrooms, pineapple, onions, patty pans.

Directions

Mix all the ingredients together in a small bowl and pour over vegetables of your choosing. You can do this on a large sheet, or toss in a plastic bag. Kids love to toss the veggies in the bag – just make sure the bag is securely closed or you will have a big mess to clean up.

When grilling veggie kabobs, you'll want to use veggies that have about the same grilling time, or you can make each kabob a different vegetable and put them on the grill according to the time they need to cook.

After allowing the vegetables to marinate to 20-30 minutes, you can load them onto your skewers. I prefer to use flat metal skewers, but the wooden ones work just fine – just be sure to presoak them so they don't burn on the grill.

Place each skewer on a hot grill. Cook for about 4 minutes, flip over and grill for an additional 4-5 minutes, until just tender.

To serve: Remove from the grill and serve with a side of rice, couscous, quinoa, or perhaps your favorite veggie burger.

QUINOA with BASIL and PINE NUTS

This is a great light, high protein dish. I love to serve this on hot summer days with grilled vegetables. It also makes a great side dish any time of the year.

Ingredients

- 1 cup quinoa
- Pinch of sea salt
- ½ cup pine nuts, cashews, or almonds
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 generous handful of fresh basil leaves, chopped
- 4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (optional)

Directions

Place the quinoa in a strainer and rinse well. Combine the quinoa with 2 cups water (or vegetable broth) and a pinch of salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes (until all the liquid is absorbed).

Meanwhile, heat the pine nuts in a small dry skillet over medium heat. Toast until the nuts are just starting to turn golden and fragrant, about 6-7 minutes, shaking the pan frequently to prevent burning. Transfer to a bowl to cool. You can also complete this same process with the quinoa before you boil it to give it a nuttier flavor.

When the quinoa is done, place it in a serving bowl and add the pine nuts. Fluff with a fork to combine. Next, add the olive oil, feta cheese, and basil. Stir to combine.

GRILLED TOMATOES



These grilled tomatoes can be made on the grill or in the oven, depending on the season and your preference. This is also a great way to prepare tomatoes “out of season” that don’t have much flavor to them, as the grilling or oven roasting really enhances their flavor.

Ingredients

The amount you will need for each item will depend on how many you decide to make. I generally plan on two tomatoes per person.

Tomatoes
Extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt
Garlic, minced
Fresh basil, thyme or rosemary
Freshly grated parmesan cheese

Directions

Heat the grill to medium high heat.

Slice the tomatoes horizontally and place on a tray, cut side up. Drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, garlic and herbs of your choosing. Then sprinkle with parmesan cheese (optional).

Carefully place the tomatoes on the grill. They will start to soften; the skins will burst and start to char slightly. Allow to grill about 10 minutes. Carefully remove from the grill and serve. If you don’t have access to a grill, these can be made in the oven. Simply heat oven to 450 degrees and cook for 30 minutes.

Variation: you could also drizzle with balsamic vinegar.

CARMELIZED CAULIFLOWER

In the past, the only way I would eat cauliflower was either cooked and smothered with butter or cheese sauce, or eaten raw with a fattening veggie dip.

This recipe is a healthy alternative to either of those. My favorite way to serve this dish is as a side dish to a sandwich in place of French fries.

Ingredients

1 head of cauliflower
2-3 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Sea salt

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Take the cauliflower, cut out the core and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch slices. Don't worry if some crumbles – no big deal. Place the cauliflower, crumbs and all, in a bowl and drizzle with olive oil. Toss to lightly coat the cauliflower.

Spread the cauliflower in a single layer on a baking sheet. Sprinkle lightly with sea salt. Bake for 25-30 minutes. That's it!

If you'd like to spice it up a bit, feel free to experiment with spices that will give it some heat, such as Creole seasoning, curry or chili powder. The possibilities are endless.

GARLIC SPINACH

Ingredients

10 ounces fresh spinach
4-5 cloves garlic, sliced thin
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Directions

In a large pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté for 1-2 minutes. Do not allow the garlic to brown, as it will develop a bitter flavor. Add the spinach with a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Toss the spinach in the oil for 3-5 minutes, until it is wilted.

Variations to this simple dish:

To spice it up, add a pinch of red pepper flakes when you add the garlic.

To add a little crunch, top with some toasted almond slices.

If you are not a big fan of garlic or just want to modify the flavor slightly, sauté some shallots in the oil in place of the garlic.

SWEET POTATO FRIES

There's nothing better with a sandwich than a side of sweet potato fries!

Ingredients

3 large sweet potatoes, sliced into "fries" (or wedges if you prefer)
2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon salt
1-2 tablespoons seasoning of your choice (cayenne, Cajun, cinnamon, garlic)
Pinch of black pepper
Pinch of white sugar

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Put the sliced sweet potatoes in a bowl, or plastic bag. Drizzle with olive oil to coat.

Combine all the spices and sugar, and sprinkle over the sweet potatoes. Mix well so that all of the potatoes are coated with the oil and spices.

Place the potatoes in a single layer on a preheated baking sheet. Be sure not to crowd the potatoes. When the potatoes get crowded what happens is that they steam, rather than bake and you end up with soggy fries instead of nice crisp fries.

Bake for 35-40 minutes, turning the potatoes after 15-20 minutes. An alternative to flipping the potatoes is to place a wire cooling rack on the baking sheet and then placing the potatoes on the rack. This will allow the heat to circulate around the potatoes.

Serve with your favorite sandwich. I recommend the grilled portabella sandwich!

MARINARA SAUCE

Ingredients

- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced small
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 4 14.5 ounce cans fire roasted tomatoes, diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon oregano
- Generous handful of parsley, chopped

Directions

In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic, and cook for 2-3 minutes, until it becomes fragrant. Do not let the pan get too hot as the garlic may burn, which will cause it to taste bitter and ruin your sauce. Add the red pepper flakes and cook an additional minute.

Add the tomato paste, and blend with other ingredients for just a minute. Add the remaining ingredients and combine well. Lower the heat to low and allow to simmer for 20-30 minutes.

If you prefer a smoother sauce, you can certainly put the tomatoes in a blender or food processor. Before serving, remove the bay leaf.

I like to make a double or triple batch of this sauce, so that I have a quick go-to sauce in the freezer for those nights when I am just too tired to cook from scratch.

STEVE'S RED SAUCE



This red sauce is the first thing I remember my husband making for me when we were dating. It is a thick, hearty sauce, and his favorite way to serve it is over spinach fettuccini with a cold glass of milk. It was love at first bite.

Ingredients

- 1 28 ounce can tomato sauce
- 2 6 ounce cans tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons dried basil
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon garlic salt
- 4 + tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 8 ounces button or baby portabella mushrooms, sliced

Directions

In a large skillet, heat 1-2 tablespoons olive oil over medium high heat. Add the onions and mushrooms and sauté for 3-5 minutes. I like a little bite to my onions and mushrooms, but if you prefer them tender, that is fine as well. Keep in mind that they will continue to cook and soften when the other ingredients are added.

Add all the other ingredients to the pan and simmer over medium low heat until heated through and the flavors have a chance to blend – about 30 minutes.

If you have fussy eaters who don't like chunks in their sauce, feel free to dice the onions and mushrooms up small.

If you like more vegetables, you could also add peppers or zucchini.

To serve: Prepare your favorite pasta and top with the red sauce. You can also grate fresh Parmesan cheese over top. This is a great dish served with garlic toast and a side of ice cold milk.

MUSHROOM GRAVY

One of my favorite comfort foods was always hamburger gravy over rice or potatoes. This recipe fills that meatless comfort food gap.

Ingredients

2 cups mushrooms, sliced (you can use white, portabella, shitake, or a combination)
1 small onion, diced small
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 ½ cups vegetable broth
1 tablespoon low sodium soy sauce
¼ cup whole wheat flour
1 tablespoon poultry seasoning
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

In a large skillet, over medium heat, add the oil and allow to heat up. When you see ripples in the oil you are ready to go. Add the onion and mushrooms. Sauté for 3-4 minutes over high heat.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the broth and soy sauce. Slowly add the flour, stirring continuously to combine and prevent lumps from forming. Bring to a low boil, then reduce heat and allow to simmer.

Add the poultry seasoning, salt and pepper. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring regularly until the gravy thickens.

Serve over brown rice. Makes 3-4 small servings.

BONUS RECIPES: SWEET TREATS



Strawberry and Mascarpone Crostini

Vegan Chocolate Cake with Chocolate Peanut Butter Frosting

Pear Tart

STRAWBERRY and MASCARPONE CROSTINI



This is a simple, light dessert or snack that I love to prepare when strawberries are at their peak of freshness. If you are not a fan of strawberries, simply swap out the strawberries with your favorite berry.

Ingredients

Baguette – sliced into ¼ inch diagonal slices
Cinnamon

4 ounces mascarpone cheese
1 teaspoon lemon zest
2 tablespoons honey

1 pint fresh strawberries, sliced
1 tablespoon honey
Fresh lemon juice

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Place the bread slices on a cooking rack on top of a baking sheet. This will allow the bread to crisp up on both sides. Sprinkle each slice of bread with a generous pinch of cinnamon. Toast in the oven for about 10 minutes, until crispy. Set aside to cool.

In a small bowl, mix together the mascarpone cheese, lemon zest and honey. Set aside.

Place the sliced strawberries in a separate bowl and drizzle with honey and a touch of the juice from the lemon you zested – to taste. Set aside.

To put it all together, simply spread a small amount of the mascarpone mixture on each slice of toast and top with a few berries.

It is as simple as that!

VEGAN CHOCOLATE CAKE with CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER FROSTING



This recipe was adapted from a cake recipe that my mother always made when I was growing up. I always loved it because it is super moist, and it taste great even without frosting. The original recipe was already vegan friendly, but I decided to increase its nutritional context by using quinoa flour, which I think adds a nice nutty flavor and more protein. The frosting is easily made vegan, or lactose friendly by simply replacing cow's milk with almond milk.

Ingredients

2 teaspoons baking soda
3 cups quinoa flour
1/3 cup high quality cocoa
2 cups white sugar
2 tablespoons white vinegar
2 teaspoons vanilla
¾ cup canola oil

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Sift together the dry ingredients into a 9" x 13" cake pan and make three holes. Add the liquid to each of the three holes. Then pour 2 cups of water over it all and combine with a whisk. Do not over mix.

Bake for 35-45 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER FROSTING

Ingredients

½ cup natural peanut butter
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
½ cup almond milk
2 ½ cups confectioners' sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

Directions

In a medium bowl, cream together the peanut butter and cocoa. Add the milk and beat until smooth. Add the confectioners' sugar, salt and vanilla. Add a little more milk if needed to get a good, smooth spreading consistency.

Spread over the cooled cake and serve. Yummy!

PEAR TART



What does one do when they have an abundance of pears from the school fruit drive?
One makes a tart!

Ingredients

Pillsbury refrigerator pie crust (or you could make your own)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sliced almonds
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
1 organic, cage free egg
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
2-3 fresh Bartlett pears, cut into $\frac{1}{8}$ inch slices (apples would work, too)
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

In a food processor, combine the almonds, flour, and salt and pulse until finely ground. Add in the egg, vanilla and nutmeg and process until well combined.

Lay the pie dough on a baking sheet. Spread the nut mixture in a thin layer over the dough, leaving a one inch border.

Arrange the pear slices, starting from the outer edge and working in, overlapping each pear slightly. Continue until the pastry is covered. Sprinkle with a generous dusting of cinnamon.

Bake for 15-20 minutes until the pastry dough is golden brown and the pears are tender. Remove from the oven and place on a cooling rack.

At our home, we love to eat this tart warm out of the oven. Trust me; this tasty tart will not last long.



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