

A Collection of Vegan Recipes

Shared with Village Voice

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Avocado and Mango Summer Salad

1/4 cup mango/peach Silk soy yogurt

2 T. vegan mayonnaise

2 T. plus 2 T. reserved orange juice (I use juice from 1-2 freshly squeezed mandarin oranges)

1 T. agave nectar

Whisk above ingredients together (reserving 2 T. orange juice) and set aside.

1 small bunch green onions, washed and finely sliced

3 carrots, peeled and shredded

2 large ripe mangos, peeled and cubed

1 extra-large avocado (or 2 medium) peeled, cubed and tossed with 1 T. reserved orange juice

1 large Fuji apple, cubed and tossed with 1 T. reserved orange juice to keep from browning

8 cups mixed salad greens

Toss above fruits, onions, avocado and lettuce together well. Pour dressing over it and toss well. Serve immediately.

Cucumber and Herb Summer Salad

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon thinly sliced fresh mint

1 tablespoon thinly sliced fresh basil

1 medium Walla Walla sweet onion, thinly sliced crosswise and separated into rings

1 large English cucumber, thinly sliced

1 ripe avocado, halved, pitted and sliced crosswise

Put olive oil, lemon juice and salt in a pint jar and set aside while you chop herbs and vegetables. Marinate mint, basil, onions and cucumbers with the oil dressing for 2 hours in the fridge. Put sliced avocado on top and serve immediately.

This is an easy and nutritious recipe that will help you use all those cucumbers and fresh herbs growing in your garden this summer. Enjoy!

Garlic Yogurt and Carrot salad

Ingredients

2 cups plain soy yogurt

4 medium carrots peeled & grated

3 cloves garlic peeled & grated

¼ bunch dill finely chopped

2 Tbsp olive oil

salt to taste

Instructions

1. Gently heat your olive oil in a frying pan and then add your grated carrots.
2. Sauté on a medium heat until they begin to soften.
3. Add salt and stir.
4. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.
5. Once your grated carrot has cooled, add your garlic, yogurt and dill. Mix everything together.
6. Do a taste test. Add more olive oil, salt or dill if you prefer.
7. Serve with whole wheat pita or whole grain sourdough bread

This is a very healthy recipe from Turkey. You may use plain yogurt or plain soy yogurt. Either way it is high in pro-biotic activity for a healthy gut flora. It is typically added to a meze platter as a dip to serve with traditional Turkish sourdough bread.

Mango/Grape/Spinach Salad

1 cup slivered almonds

1.5 teaspoons of Earth Balance Buttery Spread

1 Tablespoon agave nectar

Turn oven on to 325 degrees and put the Earth Balance and agave nectar in a 9 X 12-inch baking pan until spread is melted. Swirl the melted spread and the agave together and toss well with the nuts, evenly coating them. Put the pan back into the oven and roast nuts for about 7-8 minutes, stir with a spoon and put back in for about another 7 minutes until nuts are lightly toasted in color. Take them out and let them cool on waxed paper.

Salad ingredients:

8 cups fresh baby spinach

1.5 cups red grapes, halved

1.5 cups mango chunks (cut a large mango in half by running a sharp knife down each side of the seed, score each half in little squares. Turn each half inside out and the little chunks will come off with a little nudging from a paring knife)

1 small bunch chopped green onions, including the green stems

Salad dressing:

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

¼ cup olive oil (I use the light flavored, since it goes with fruit better)

½ teaspoon salt (or to taste)

3 Tablespoons Agave nectar

Shake dressing ingredients together well in a half-pint jar with lid.

Toss the cooled nuts (may need to break them apart), green onions and fruit with the spinach leaves. Pour the salad dressing over this and mix dressing well to coat the spinach leaves, using two large serving spoons or salad tongs. You can make the salad ahead, but don't add the dressing until right before serving or the spinach leaves start wilting.

In this recipe I would like to highlight the nutritional benefits found in both the mangoes and grapes. Of course spinach and almonds are also nutrient-rich foods with many health benefits. Mangoes are good sources of fiber, Vitamin C, Vitamin A, folate, B-6 and potassium. They are rich in antioxidant activity, including cancer protective beta-carotenoids and zeaxanthin that plays a role in filtering out harmful blue light rays and protect against macular degeneration.

Experimental data increasingly suggests the bioactive compounds present in mangos exert anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic, antiviral and antibacterial properties. Red grapes are rich sources of powerful antioxidants known as polyphenols, which have multiple health benefits in preventing and slowing degenerative conditions—including heart disease. Resveratrol is a polyphenol found in the skins of dark red and purple grapes that has been widely studied as a contributing factor in heart health, especially in the Mediterranean countries where vineyards abound.

Grapes are also rich in a powerful antioxidant called quercetin, which has anti-inflammatory properties.

I grew up in Turkey using unsweetened grape molasses called pekmez as a daily staple. Dark grape juice is simmered for several hours, until it becomes thick molasses and then it is sealed in a jar, like jelly. We used tahini and pekmez like peanut butter and jelly on bread. And fresh apple cake made with pekmez as a sweetener is to die for!

Quinoa Tabbouleh Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed well
- ½ tsp. salt (plus more to taste)
- 1 ¼ cup water
- 4 Tbsp. Fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup Extra-virgin olive oil (may use less)
- 1 pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 large English cucumber or 2 Persian cucumbers, finely diced
- 1 cup fresh garden tomatoes, finely diced
- 2/3 cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- ½ cup fresh mint, chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, finely sliced (or 1 cup sweet onion, finely diced)

Instructions

Bring quinoa, salt, and water to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until quinoa is tender, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

Meanwhile, whisk lemon juice and garlic in a small bowl. Gradually whisk in olive oil. Season dressing to taste with salt and cayenne pepper.

Spread out quinoa on a large rimmed baking sheet to cool. Transfer to a large bowl; mix in ¼ cup dressing.

Add cucumber, tomatoes, herbs, and onions to bowl with quinoa; toss to coat. Season to taste with salt. Drizzle remaining dressing over the top and mix in well.

Chill for 2 hours before serving.

Quinoa Tabbouleh Salad is a fast and easy recipe filled with fresh herbs and vegetables. Light and delicious! It's perfect for the hot days of summer.

Rainbow Taco Salad

1 1/2 cups chopped mild sweet onions (use green onions if mild onions unavailable)

1 cup grated carrots

1 cup finely chopped purple cabbage

1 cup chopped green /and or red bell pepper (optional)

1 cup frozen sweet corn kernels, thawed

2 (15.5 oz.) cans drained pinto beans (organic pinto beans from Grocery Outlet are cooked nice and soft)

1 1/2 cups mild salsa whisked with 1/2 cup Vegenaïse (or more if desired)

Mix all the above ingredients together well and chill for at least 2 hours to mix flavors.

Add the following ingredients and toss together well right before serving:

2-3 medium avocados, chopped and mixed with a little lemon juice to keep from browning

12 cups torn leaf lettuce or romaine lettuce (wash, spin in lettuce spinner and chill in bags ahead

so it is nice and crispy)

4 to 5 cups organic, blue corn chips (crush them in a plastic bag before adding)

This is a wonderful picnic salad. You can have the first part mixed and chilled and then toss with the second ingredient list after you get to your picnic site. I also make the first part and divide it into 3 parts and make it last 3 days for the 2 of us, adding the divided last group of ingredients right before serving -since it is too much for 2 people to eat in one day.

The vegetables in this meal-in-a-dish are rich in health-preserving phyto-chemicals. It is also a complete protein and can be used on hot summer days when it is not fun to turn on the stove. You can cook a frozen veggie burger in the microwave and serve with a whole grain bun and the fixings to complete your no-cook meal!

Spinach and Mushroom Salad

Dressing:

½ cup salad oil

¼ cup tarragon vinegar

1 tsp. seasoned salt

½ tsp. summer savory

1 small thinly sliced onion

½ pound fresh mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

Croutons:

3 Tbsp. margarine

1 Tbsp. vegan Worcestershire sauce

1 clove garlic, minced

2 cups Corn Chex cereal

2 Tbsp. sesame seeds

Spinach:

1 pound torn spinach

Directions:

1. Mix dressing ingredients well. Let stand overnight in refrigerator.
2. Melt margarine and mix in Worcestershire sauce and garlic.
3. Stir in cereal and sesame seeds, coating evenly. Heat and stir over low heat 4 minutes until lightly browned.
4. Remove cereal mixture from heat, and cool on paper toweling.
5. Wash spinach and drain well.
6. Place torn spinach in salad bowl and toss with dressing and croutons. Serves 6 to 8.

Superfood Black Bean and Quinoa Salad

2 cups cooked quinoa (1 cup dry quinoa yields about 2 cups cooked)
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp. ground cumin
2-4 cloves garlic, pressed, grated, or finely chopped
¼ cup fresh-squeezed lemon juice or raw apple cider vinegar
¾ cup salsa
1 tsp. fine sea salt and ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional for heat)
2 15-ounce cans black beans, rinsed and drained well
½ each: red bell, yellow, and green pepper, diced
1 medium sweet onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
1 handful of cilantro, rough chopped (about 1/3 cup)

Prepare the quinoa by first rinsing the grain in a fine mesh strainer and then cooking 1 cup of quinoa in 2 ¼ cups water with 2 tsp. McKay's chicken-style seasoning for about 20 minutes or until the quinoa sprouts its little tails.

While the quinoa is cooking, whisk the olive oil, cumin, garlic, lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, salt and cayenne (if using) together in the bottom of a large bowl to let the flavors marry while you chop the veggies.

Rinse and drain the black beans, then chop the veggies; the key is to make the peppers and onions about the same size as the beans.

Add the cooked quinoa, beans and veggies to the bowl and gently fold it all together with the dressing. The quinoa can be warm, room temp, or cold when you make the dish. Let it chill in the refrigerator at least 30 minutes to let the flavors come together. It tastes best served room temperature or chilled. Salad keeps well in the refrigerator up to 5 days, so double the recipe if you wish.

Serves 8 to 10

Salads that are the product of combining cold ingredients can maximize the health benefits of raw garlic. Raw garlic has long been used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Consider the benefits of raw garlic:

ORGANOSULPHUR COMPOUNDS: Garlic is high in organosulfur compounds, which are believed to be responsible for its aroma, flavor and health benefits. According to the Linus Pauling Institute, organosulfur compounds in garlic act as anti-clotting agents by inhibiting platelet aggregation and may help prevent cardiovascular disease. Researchers also believe these organosulfur compounds may be protective against cancer.

ANTICARCINOGENIC ACTIVITY: heating garlic has been shown to reduce its anticancer properties. Sixty seconds of microwave heating and 45 minutes of oven heating both blocked the anticarcinogenic activity of garlic, according to a study published in 2001 in *The Journal of Nutrition*. However, crushing garlic and allowing it to stand for 10 minutes before microwave heating for 60 seconds was found to preserve some of garlic's anticarcinogenic activity.

ANTICLOTTING EFFECT: Oven baking—at 200 C (400 F)—or boiling for up to 3 minutes, did not affect garlic's ability to inhibit platelet aggregation, according to a study published in 2007 in the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*. Heating for 6 minutes suppressed all anticlotting activity in whole garlic, while crushed garlic showed reduced, but still significant, anti-clotting activity. Heating garlic for more than 10 minutes and microwaving garlic result in no anticlotting effects.

HOW COOKING AFFECTS GARLIC: Crushing garlic releases an enzyme called alliinase that causes the formation of allicin, which breaks down to form the beneficial organosulfur compounds. However, the heat from cooking can inactivate alliinase. Researchers have found that crushing garlic and letting it stand for 10 minutes before cooking allows time for alliinase to work before heat inactivates it. So, the next time you're making something with garlic, crush it first and add it to the dish toward the end of the cooking time.

Thai Quinoa Salad

Quinoa/Vegetable Mixture:

¾ cup uncooked, rinsed quinoa

Simmer quinoa for 20-25 minutes in 2 cups of water until it turns clear and gets little tails. Cool cooked quinoa and fluff with fork before adding in the following vegetables:

2 cups shredded red cabbage

1 red bell pepper

1 cup shredded carrots

½ cup chopped cilantro

¼ cup diced green onions

½ red onion, diced

½ cup roasted cashews

Peanut Sauce Dressing:

¼ cup all-natural peanut butter or cashew butter

2 teaspoons fresh grated ginger

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1/3 cup agave nectar or honey

1/3 cup lemon juice

1-2 Tablespoons toasted sesame oil

1-2 Tablespoons olive oil

Water to thin, if necessary

To make the peanut sauce, microwave peanut butter and honey for 10-15 seconds. Add the rest of the dressing ingredients and whiz in blender or food processor until smooth and creamy.

Stir dressing into quinoa/vegetable mixture well. Chill at least 1 hour in the refrigerator. Sprinkle nuts on top right before serving.

You can take this salad to your holiday family dinner potluck or office party buffet. It is so flavorful and delicious—your friends and family will wonder how something loaded with healthy ingredients could taste so good!

Walla Walla Sweet Onion Potato Salad

12 oz. Mori-Nu Silken Tofu

1/3 to 1/2 cup Vegemise (to taste)

1 large dill pickle

1/3 teaspoon turmeric

1/2 teaspoon each, onion and garlic powder (or to taste)

1/2 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

Blend all the above ingredients together and add to the following potato salad ingredients:

5 cups cooked, diced potatoes

1 medium finely chopped Walla Walla sweet onion

½ cup chopped celery

½ cup chopped pickles

salt to taste (for those used to less salt, the pickles are enough)

Mix tofu and Vegemise dressing well with the potato salad ingredients.

Chill at least 2 hours before serving. Overnight is even better.

This is one of my favorite, easy summer recipes. The tofu replaces the protein in the eggs and you don't even miss them. The turmeric makes the salad yellow so it appears to have boiled egg yolks, while adding the health benefits of the curcumin which include the potential to help protect against heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and cancer. Its potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects may also help improve symptoms of depression and arthritis. Use turmeric generously in your cooking. You can also take concentrated supplements for even more pronounced benefits. Studies show that curcumin is more bioavailable to the body when taken with omega-3 fats that include DHA and EPA. You can now find supplements that contain DHA and EPA from microalgae plant sources. Look for the Nordic Naturals microalgae-derived Omega-3 capsules that contain both EPA and DHA at Andy's Market.

Salad Dressing

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

1/4 cup freshly-squeezed lemon juice

Zest of 1 lemon (1/4 tsp packed)

2 garlic cloves, minced or pressed (1 tsp)

1/2 tsp salt

Powdered oregano to taste (optional)

Place all ingredients in a jar and shake to combine. Stores well in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Raw garlic is more effective than cooked, so try adding finely minced garlic to your soups after the cooking process. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Make an olive oil and lemon juice vinaigrette salad dressing with minced raw garlic, instead of using a dairy-based ranch dressing.

Curried Scalloped Potatoes

Ingredients:

6 medium red-skinned potatoes, about 1 ½ to 2 pounds

3 Tbsp. Earth Balance margarine

6 green onions, with 2 inches green, sliced (optional)

3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour

2 cups plain soy milk (or may use light coconut milk)

1-2 Tbsp. mild curry powder (or to taste)

1 tsp. salt (or to taste)

Directions:

Lightly oil a 1 ½ to 2-quart baking dish. Heat oven to 350 F.

Wash potatoes well and slice thinly—about 1/8 to ¼ inch—into a large bowl. A mandolin or food processor with slicing disk makes nice, even slices.

In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, melt margarine. Add sliced green onions and sauté for 1 minute. Stir in flour until smooth and bubbly.

Add milk, curry powder, and salt to taste. Cook, stirring, until thick and bubbly. Pour the mixture over potatoes and mix well.

Pour the potato mixture into prepared baking dish; cover with foil. Bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake for about 15-20 minutes longer, or until potatoes are tender.

Serves 4 to 6.

Make Ahead Tip: Sprinkle salt over sliced potatoes, tossing well. Make sauce without salt, using the margarine, onions, milk, and curry powder and then pour it over the potatoes in the baking pan. Cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Remove from the refrigerator about 20-30 minutes before baking, or bake for about 15 minutes longer.

Fast and Easy Eggplant and Cannellini Ratatouille

4 large cloves garlic, finely minced

1 cup onion, chopped

2 Tablespoons olive oil

2 teaspoons McKay's Chicken Seasoning (or to taste)

1 small eggplant, diced (with or without skin)

3 cups of your favorite pasta sauce

1 can Bush's Best Cannellini Beans (Walmart)

Sauté the garlic, onion, and eggplant in the olive oil until tender. Add pasta sauce and cannellini beans and simmer for 15 minutes on low to mix flavors. Serve over cooked brown rice, whole grain penne pasta, or a baked potato for a very fast and easy meal. (serves 4 so you will want to double the recipe if you have a large family)

Those of you have traveled to Turkey know that eggplant, tomato sauce, and cannellini beans are served in every restaurant. This healthy dish is rich in soluble fiber and lycopene, a phytonutrient with antioxidant properties. It is the pigment that gives red and pink fruits such as tomatoes, watermelons, and pink grapefruit their characteristic color. Lycopene has been linked to health benefits ranging from heart health to protection against sunburns and certain types of cancers, most significantly prostate cancer.

Mushroom Stroganoff with Cashew Cream

1 medium onion, chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced

2-3 Tablespoons olive, canola or avocado oil

1 lb. sliced, fresh mushrooms

3 Tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 cups vegetable broth (can use Better Than Boullion Vegetable to make broth)

Cashew Cream

1 cup raw cashews

3/4 cup water

1 -2 T. Bragg's Aminos

1. Make the Cashew Cream: Bring 3 cups of water to a boil. Pour the hot water over the cashews and let soak for 5 minutes. Drain the cashews and discard the soaking water. Add them to a blender along with the 3/4 cup fresh water and Braggs. May add 1 tablespoon lemon juice or raw apple cider if you want it to be more like sour cream. Blend until very smooth. Set aside.

2. In a large pot or pan, add the onions and oil and cook until onions soften. Add mushrooms and turn the heat to medium-high. Stir frequently until onions are translucent and the mushrooms start to release their moisture, and then cook until the mushrooms are tender and have shrunk in size.

3. Stir in the garlic and cook for 1 more minute, then sprinkle the flour on top and stir it into the vegetables. Gradually pour in the vegetable broth, stirring. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 4-5 minutes until it thickens slightly.

4. Now add the cashew cream and stir it in. You should have a very creamy mushroom gravy at this point.

5. 10 oz. cooked pasta of choice. Stir in the cooked pasta and cook until heated throughout, about 1-2 minutes. Taste, add salt, Braggs and a sprinkle of cayenne pepper (optional). as needed. Sprinkle with fresh parsley, if desired, and serve immediately.

While preparing this recipe you will need to be patient. Polenta takes more than half an hour to cook, and you have to stir it the whole time. Try to enjoy the moment while you stir, and stir, and stir! Polenta tastes best when you do it that way.

Polenta Provençal

Ingredients:

1 jar chopped sundried tomatoes packed in oil (8.5 oz.)

6 cups water

2 tsp salt (plus more as needed)

1 cup coarse or medium-ground corn grits

¼ cup chopped fresh basil

Ground black pepper (optional)

Instructions

Lightly mist an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

Drain the sundried tomatoes. Pour 3 cups of water into a medium saucepan over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. Lower the heat, cover, and keep it simmering for use later in the recipe.

Combine the remaining 3 cups of water and 2 tsp. of salt in a large, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil. While whisking continuously in a circular motion, slowly pour the grits into the middle of the pan in a steady stream. Lower the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and continue whisking constantly. When the mixture begins to thicken, switch from using a whisk to a wooden spoon and, still stirring constantly, add 1 cup of the simmering water. Continue stirring constantly.

After 7-10 minutes, or when the mixture gets very thick again, add another cup of the simmering water. Continue to stir until it gets thick again. Add the remaining simmering water and keep stirring for 5-10 minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Stir in the tomatoes and basil and continue cooking, stirring constantly, for 5 more minutes. Remove from the heat. Season with additional salt, if needed, and pepper to taste.

Transfer the polenta to the prepared pan, smoothing the surface with the back of a spoon. Cool to room temperature; then refrigerate for 30 minutes. Cut into 9 squares. Serve at room temperature. Alternatively, position an oven rack several inches below the broiler and preheat the broiler. Arrange the squares on a baking sheet and broil for about 5 minutes, or until browned.

Quinoa, Mushroom, Zucchini Patties

Ingredients:

16 mushrooms, chopped

1 Zucchini, grated

1 Tbsp. Olive oil, plus more for frying

2 cups cooked quinoa (3/4 cup dry)

Salt (see instructions)

½ tsp. crushed red pepper (or more, if you like it spicy!)

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 bunch green onions, chopped

4 egg whites (or egg replacer equivalent to 2 eggs)

1 cup whole wheat bread crumbs

Instructions:

Cook quinoa according to directions

Sprinkle mushrooms and zucchini with a generous pinch of salt to draw moisture out of the vegetables. Sauté in 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium-high heat. Stir only once in the beginning, and allow liquid from vegetables to boil away. Continue cooking until vegetables are tender and most of the liquid has evaporated.

Mix cooked quinoa, vegetables, and remaining ingredients in a medium-sized bowl

Form 6-8 patties with the mixture and fry over medium-high heat in 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a nonstick skillet. Cook 2-4 minutes on each side, or until browned.

Move patties to parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes.

For all of you gardeners (and friends of gardeners) who have extra zucchini—this is a recipe you will want to try. I think you'll enjoy it!

Roasted Red Peppers with Quinoa

3 whole red peppers

1 and 1/4 cup quinoa

2.5 cups water (may need to add a little more if needed to fully soften grain)

3 teaspoons McKays Chicken Seasoning

3 to 4 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

12 oz finely chopped, fresh mushrooms

4 garlic cloves, finely minced

1 large sweet onion, chopped

1/4 cup finely chopped parsley

1/4 cup Bragg's Liquid Aminos (Andy's Market)

1/4 cup raw apple cider vinegar

1 cup coarsely chopped, salted roasted nuts (almonds, hazelnuts or cashews)

Halve the red peppers lengthwise and remove the core, seeds and white ribs. Drizzle with a few drops of olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Roast at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes on cookie sheet, until slightly softened. Cool and set aside.

Cook quinoa with water and McKay's Chicken seasoning in a saucepan for about 20 minutes, until tender and the grain looks like it has little white tails. While the quinoa is cooking, heat the olive oil in a non-stick skillet to medium heat and add the mushrooms, fresh/minced garlic, onion and Bragg's Aminos. Sauté' until the onions turn clear, stirring often. Add the fresh parsley & cook until wilted. Add the cooked quinoa, stirring in well. Turn the heat off and stir in the raw vinegar. Stuff the roasted red pepper shells with the quinoa mixture and return the cookie sheet to the oven on 350 for 5 to 8 minutes. Sprinkle the chopped roasted nuts on top and serve. You may also sprinkle a little goat cheese or feta cheese on the top.

Health benefits of quinoa and red peppers:

Quinoa contains almost twice as much fiber as most other grains.

Quinoa is rich in Iron.

Quinoa contains the amino acid lysine, that is low in other grains, and is considered a complete protein with much higher in protein content than other grains.

Quinoa is rich in minerals such as magnesium, manganese, calcium, phosphorus and potassium

Quinoa is high in B Vitamins and Vitamin E

Quinoa is naturally gluten free for those with gluten intolerance

Red peppers contain more than 200% of your daily need for Vitamin C

Red peppers are high in Vitamin B6 and Folate

Red peppers contain phytochemicals that are rich in anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory activity, including several carotenoids such as beta-carotene and zeaxanthin.

Red peppers contain capsaicin which has multiple health benefits on it's own.

Rosemary Roasted Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients

2 large sweet potatoes or yams, peeled or unpeeled and cut into 3/4-inch chunks

2 Tbsp. cold-pressed avocado oil

2 Tbsp. minced fresh rosemary

¾ tsp. salt

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 450 F

Mist a baking sheet with a nonstick cooking spray. I am partial to the Chosen Foods pan spray that is free of propellant and has a high heat smoking point of 490 degrees F. (You can find it both at Walmart and the health food section of the Grocery Outlet)

Put the sweet potatoes in a large bowl. Sprinkle with the oil, rosemary and salt. Toss until evenly coated.

Arrange the sweet potatoes in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet

Roast in the oven for about 25 minutes, or until fork-tender

Here is a great recipe for this time in the year, when you have planted some herbs such as rosemary in a pot on your back deck. Rosemary contains potent antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that can help to protect against both cancer and cardiovascular disease, along with helping to protect against macular degeneration. Oregano also has potential health benefits to the immune system with its anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties. I keep pots of both these herbs on my back porch and enjoy using them every summer. In the rural villages of Turkey, where I grew up, they will give you oregano tea (made of dried oregano leaves from their gardens), when you request an herbal tea instead of their traditional chai tea. I often make myself a cup of tea by steeping fresh or dried oregano leaves with some chopped fresh ginger in a small teapot when I'm trying to ward off a cold. You can dry your own herbs and use them in cooking or in teas during the winter months.

Southern Greens with Black-Eyed Peas

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil or cold-pressed avocado oil

4 cloves garlic, minced or pressed

6 cups chopped collard greens or baby kale or baby spinach

2 cans (15 oz each) black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained

1/4 cup vegan Worcestershire sauce (Safeway Organics has a vegan brand and you can also purchase Wizard's vegan Worcestershire brand on Amazon)

Salt to taste

Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and cook and stir for 30 seconds. Add the greens and cook and stir for about 5 minutes or until bright green and slightly tender. Add the black-eyed peas and Worcestershire sauce and mix well. Bring to a boil before covering and turning down to simmer on low for about 20 minutes, or until the greens are tender to your liking. Season with salt to taste before serving.

Leafy green vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. They're packed with vitamins, minerals and fiber but low in calories. Eating a diet rich in leafy greens can offer numerous health benefits including reduced risk of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and mental decline. There is a link to eating plenty of dark green leafy veggies daily and increased levels of nitric oxide, which protects blood vessel walls against oxidative stress.

Tofu Tacos with Cilantro-Avocado Cabbage

1 lb. cubed, extra firm tofu

Juice from 1 medium lime

2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

1 tablespoon agave nectar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon California, mild chili powder

1/2 teaspoon cumin

1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 tablespoon cold pressed avocado oil

1 red pepper, seeded and sliced into strips

Put the tofu into a gallon Ziploc bag. In a small bowl, combine lime juice, garlic, agave nectar, salt, chili powder, cumin, cayenne pepper, and oil. Pour over tofu, shake well, and marinate for 2 hours. Heat a small amount of avocado oil in a non-stick skillet and brown tofu until crispy, stirring often. Put the tofu into an 8" X 8" baking dish and keep in warm oven (200 degrees Fahrenheit) while you cook the red pepper strips in the same pan for 3-5 minutes or until tender-crisp. Remove from heat and set aside.

Cilantro-Avocado dressing with cabbage

1/2 head green cabbage, cored and shredded (about 6 cups)

1 large ripe avocado

1/2 cup soymilk

1/4 cup fresh, chopped cilantro leaves

2 tablespoons lime juice

1 tablespoon agave nectar

3/4 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

Add avocado, milk, cilantro, lime juice, and salt to a food processor or blender and pulse until smooth. Mix with cabbage and toss well. Divide the tofu and the cabbage evenly among 8 whole grain flour or corn tortillas that have been softened by warming them in a dry skillet on both sides until pliable.

Enjoy this wonderful one-dish meal with nutrient-rich ingredients.

Tofu and Black Bean Fajitas

Use the following scrambled breakfast tofu recipe as part of the filling:

1 lb. extra firm tofu, drained and cut into 1/8 inch cubes

2 tsp. McKay's Chicken-style Seasoning

1 tsp. onion powder

½ tsp. garlic powder

Toss the seasonings over the cubed tofu and mix well. Fry in a nonstick skillet well sprayed with pure coconut oil pan spray, until crispy. Set aside.

1 sweet onion, chopped

½ cup each of red, yellow, and green peppers

Taco seasoning to taste (or make your own with ½ tsp. cumin, 1 tsp. mild chili powder, and ¼ tsp. salt)

Stir-fry the onion/pepper blend in a nonstick pan coated well with a canola oil or coconut oil pan spray for 3-4 minutes and add:

1 can black beans, rinsed and drained

Soften 4 whole wheat soft burrito shells in microwave or by warming them briefly in a nonstick skillet.

Fill each burrito with 1/3 cup tofu and ¼ cup veggie mixture and ¼ cup of drained, black beans

Sprinkle filling with 2 Tbsp. Daiya vegan, grated cheddar style cheese or 2 Tbsp. almond cheddar-style non-dairy cheese

Fold the burrito shell up by tucking in ends and then rolling up sideways and bake in a 235 degree oven for 5-10 minutes until cheese is melted.

Optional: put 1 Tbsp. Tofutti sour cream and/or ¼ cup salsa on top before serving.

These Tofu and Black Bean Fajitas are always a hit! You can scramble the tofu and even fry up the veggies the day before, and store them in the refrigerator. Lightly reheat the tofu and veggies before assembling and baking. Enjoy!

TAVA

(Turkish/Armenian Vegetable Casserole)

3 large onions

1 heaping tablespoon minced garlic

1/2 cup olive oil

1 tablespoon McKay's Chicken Seasoning

1 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

3 medium diced zucchini

1 large eggplant (if you slice into 1 inch slices, salt lightly, let it sit for 15 minutes and then press between 2 paper towels to squeeze out excess liquid before dicing, it holds its shape better when cooked and is less bitter)

1 large green pepper

1 large red pepper

1 28oz. can peeled, diced tomatoes in juice

1 28 oz. can plain tomato sauce

3 tablespoons Agave Nectar

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch cloves and allspice (to taste)

Saute chopped onion in olive oil with garlic and McKay's Chicken Seasoning until onions are clear and turning slightly brown. Dice eggplant (may leave skins on), green pepper, red pepper and zucchini. Add to sauted onion. Continue to saute for another 15 minutes. Add canned tomatoes and seasonings. Place in 2 quart covered casserole or any roasting pan covered with foil and roast at 300 degrees for 30 to 45 minutes. Serve hot with brown rice or cold with whole grain sour dough bread. The cinnamon, cloves and allspice give it the authentic Middle-eastern flavor.

This is one of my favorite, plant-based dishes from my childhood in Turkey. Both the Armenians and the Turks make it often in the summer when the tomatoes, zucchini and eggplant are vine-ripened and readily available in the open air farmer's markets or their own gardens. Sometimes they add cooked diced potatoes and cooked, garden-fresh green beans to the flavorful vegetable dish. The onions and garlic sautéed in plenty of olive oil are the secret to the wonderful flavor. Don't be afraid to try the cinnamon, cloves and allspice because it adds a delightful, authentic Middle-eastern flavor to the vegetable dish.

Vegan Eggplant Casserole

Ingredients:

2 large eggplant sliced into ½ inch slices (sprinkle each slice lightly with salt and let set 10 minutes and then press some of the liquid out by putting it between two paper towels and pressing gently with your hands)

1 cup Panko breadcrumbs (Andy's has them)

½ cup flour

1 tsp. dried oregano

1 tsp. dried basil

½ tsp. salt

Daiya vegan mozzarella

Marinara sauce

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 F

Mix the breadcrumbs with flour and seasonings

Generously coat the bottom of a large skillet with olive oil (2 to 3 tablespoons) and place it over medium heat

Dip each eggplant slice into the batter (being careful to coat both sides), and then into the panko mixture. Place the slice into the hot skillet. Repeat with additional slices, placing as many as will fit into the skillet without crowding.

Cook for 4-5 minutes, until browned on the bottoms, gently flip, and cook another 4-5 minutes on the other side. Transfer the slices to a plate lined with paper towels. Add oil to the skillet as needed, and repeat until all of the eggplant slices are cooked.

Ladle about 1 cup of marinara sauce onto the bottom of a 9 X 13-inch baking dish. Arrange 1/3 of the eggplant slices over the sauce.

Roll a chunk of Daiya vegan mozzarella (about 2 Tablespoons) into a ball in your hands, then flatten it. Place the mozzarella over an eggplant slice. Repeat, covering each of the slices and using about half of the mozzarella. Ladle about a cup of sauce over the Daiya mozzarella coated slices. Repeat the layering arrangement once, then top with the remaining eggplant slices and a layer of sauce.

Place the dish into the oven and bake, uncovered, until bubbly, 25-30 minutes

Mediterranean-style fluffy polenta/sundried tomato makes a great side dish for this delicious casserole.

Vegan Pad Thai

Sauce:

2 quarts water

¾ lb. Mung bean sprouts

6 oz. rice noodles (1/4 inch side—try to find brown rice noodles or may use brown rice linguine)

3 Tbsp. fresh lime juice

3 Tbsp. Catsup

3 Tbsp. pure maple syrup

¼ cup soy sauce or Bragg liquid aminos

Remaining ingredients:

1 pound extra firm tofu (tossed with mixture of 2 tsp. McKay's chicken seasoning, 1 tsp. onion powder and ½ tsp. garlic powder)

3 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil or avocado oil

3-4 cloves garlic; minced or pressed

2 cups carrots; grated

2/3 cup peanuts; chopped

6-8 scallions or green onions; chopped (about 1 cup)

In a covered pot, bring the water to a rolling boil. Blanch the mung bean sprouts by placing them in a strainer or small colander and dipping it into the boiling water for 30 seconds. Set aside to drain well. When the water returns to a boil, stir in the rice noodles and cook for 3-5 minutes, until tender but firm. Drain the cooked noodles, rinse them under cool water, and set them aside to drain. Fry seasoned tofu in a large, non-stick pan in 1-2Tbsp. avocado oil and 1 Tbsp. Bragg aminos until crispy on all sides. Removes from skillet and set aside.

Prepare the remaining ingredients and have them near at hand before you begin to stir-fry. Heat the oil in a wok or a large skillet. Add the garlic and swirl them in the oil for a moment, and stir in the grated carrots. Stir-fry for 1 minutes. Pour in the sauce mixture and stir everything together. Add the drained rice noodles and mung sprouts and tofu, toss to distribute evenly. Stir in the peanuts and scallions, and serve at once.

Almost Cheesy Cream of Cauliflower Soup

2 large onions, chopped

4 large fresh garlic cloves, diced

1 large potato (or 2 medium)

4 medium carrots, peeled and diced

2-4 tablespoons cold-pressed avocado oil

4 teaspoons McKay's Chicken-style Seasoning

Sauté the onions, garlic and McKay's in the oil until onions start turning translucent. Add the diced potato and carrots, and continue to cook on low until vegetables are tender (this can be made the day ahead and refrigerated).

1 extra-large head of cauliflower

2 tablespoons McKay's Chicken-style Seasoning

1-2 teaspoons Nature's Seasoning (available at Walmart) or Himalayan salt to taste.

Cool sautéed vegetable mixture while washing the head of cauliflower and cutting it into chunks. Place cauliflower in large stock pot filled with 2 quarts of water and seasonings. Bring to a boil and then turn down and simmer for 15 minutes or until cauliflower is fork tender. Take a potato masher and mash the cauliflower until it is in very small pieces.

2 cups unsweetened, unflavored Pacific soymilk

1 can (14 oz.) Wild Oats Coconut Milk

Place the cooled vegetable sauté with the soy and coconut milk in a blender and blend at high speed until very smooth. Slowly pour the mixture over the cooked cauliflower in the stock pot, stirring it in well. Turn burner down to the lowest setting and cook for another 20 minutes, stirring as needed. Add more McKay's or salt to taste. Serve hot with multigrain saltine crackers.

Cream of Carrot Soup

¼ cup olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

6 large carrots, peeled and diced

2 garlic cloves chopped

1 medium turnip, peeled and diced

2 teaspoon McKay's Chicken seasoning

1 quart chicken flavored broth (4 tsp McKay's & 4 cups water)

1 can full fat coconut milk

½ cup coarsely chopped roasted pistachio nuts

In a 3-liter saucepan, place oil, onions and garlic with a pinch of salt or a teaspoon of McKay's. Saute until onions turn clear and then add the carrots, turnips, chicken broth and seasonings. Simmer until vegetables are very soft. Add coconut milk. Puree in 2 or 3 batches in blender or food processor. Simmer a few more minutes and ladle into soup bowls.

Garnish with the chopped pistachios and minced fresh parsley.

Carrots are loaded with the health benefits of multiple carotenoids. Turnips are actually a cousin of broccoli, Brussels sprouts, arugula and kale and classed with these anti-cancer, cruciferous vegetables. Pistachios are a nutrient-loaded garnish that adds texture. They are a great source of health fats, fiber, protein, antioxidants and B-vitamins. They contain prebiotics that are a special form of dietary fiber that act as fertilizers that nourish the good bacteria in your gut and help keep the bowel wall healthy and free from inflammation. These good bacteria can be found in yogurt and other fermented foods like raw sauerkraut.

Creamy Mushroom Barley Cabbage Soup

1 quart Pacific mushroom broth (Andy's soup section)

2 cups McKay's chicken or beef broth (mix 2 tsp broth powder with water)

1 and 1/4 cups pearl barley

2 bay leaves

1 cup Soy Silk creamer (choose plain and not vanilla flavored - dairy case Andy's)

1-2 cups plain soy milk (I use Pacific unsweetened soymilk found at Andy's)

1/3 cup cold pressed avocado or olive oil

2 large onions, chopped

3 large cloves fresh garlic, minced

1 heaping tablespoon Better Than Bouillon Vegetable seasoning base (Grandma used

Marmite but I prefer this bouillon found at Andy's)

1 lb. coarsely chopped fresh mushrooms

3 cups chopped green cabbage

Pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)

Salt or more McKay's broth powder to taste

In a large stock kettle over low heat, simmer the barley in broths with the bay leaves until the grain is soft and tender, about 45 minutes. While the barley is cooking, prepare the second set of ingredients as follows: sauté onions, garlic, oil, and Better than Bouillon in a large non-stick frying pan over medium/low heat. Chop mushrooms and cabbage while onions and garlic are cooking. When onions are translucent, add mushrooms and cabbage and continue to sauté for another 15 to 20 minutes or until vegetables are tender. May add a little water as needed.

Place half of the cooked barley with the soy creamer and soymilk in the blender and puree until creamy and smooth.

Now transfer both the pureed barley mixture and sautéed vegetables into the stock pot of cooked barley. Add a pinch of cayenne if you like the extra flavor. Simmer on very low, stirring often, for another 25 minutes to let flavors mix. Your soup is now complete and ready to serve.

If I'm cooking for a crowd, I make a double batch because we love it left over. It does thicken overnight so I will thin it with a little more soymilk and add more McKay's broth powder as needed the next day!

This creamy barley soup recipe has been handed down from my great-grandmother, who was of German-Jewish ancestry. She immigrated to Kansas from Ukraine when she was a small child. I used to beg my grandmother to make this when she came to visit me as a young bride. I loved it so much, I wrote the recipe down, while I watched her make it from memory. It is a highly nutritious "comfort food" that is wonderful to serve on those cold winter evenings.

Hearty Black Bean Soup

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons expeller-pressed vegetable oil

2 large onions, diced

1 ½ tablespoons mild chili powder

1 tsp. cumin

2 tsp. powdered oregano

1 Tbsp. McKay's Chicken-style Seasoning

4 cloves garlic (or 2 tsp. garlic powder)

3 cans (15 oz. each) black beans

3 cups water

2 bay leaves

½ cup chopped fresh cilantro parsley (for garnish)

1 Tablespoon Tofutti sour cream (for garnish)

4 slices avocado (for garnish)

Instructions:

Saute onions in vegetable oil with all the seasonings (listed before the black beans) until the onions are translucent and tender.

Add the black beans, water, and bay leaves and simmer for 35-40 minutes to mix flavors.

Remove the bay leaves

Use a hand-held blender, and blend until creamy, with some of the black beans left—so the soup is somewhat chunky. You may also take half the soup and blend it until creamy in a regular blender, and return it to the rest of the soup that was not blended. It looks and tastes so nice when garnished with the Tofutti sour cream, cilantro, and avocado slices. VERY YUMMY!

This Hearty Black Bean Soup is a wonderful recipe that will warm you on chilly days, and delight your guests! It was voted as the best soup in the Creation Health wellness program.

Roasted Asparagus

2 bunches asparagus, trimmed and washed

3 Tbsp. olive oil

1 tsp. onion powder

1 tsp. garlic powder

1 tsp. sea salt

1-2 tsp. McKay's Chicken-style seasoning

Set oven to preheat at 400 degrees. Place the asparagus into a mixing bowl and drizzle with the olive oil. Toss to coat the spears, then sprinkle with the pre-mixed salt and seasonings. Arrange the asparagus onto a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake until just tender, about 12 minutes depending on the thickness, turning asparagus over about halfway through cooking so it browns on both sides. May sprinkle with lemon juice just before serving.

Asparagus—especially the purple kind—contains anthocyanins, pigments that give red, blue, and purple coloring to fruits and vegetables and have antioxidant effects that can assist your body in fighting free radicals. Although cooking asparagus helps activate its cancer-fighting potential, overcooking can reduce its nutritional value. Asparagus is a good source of fiber, folate, and Vitamins A, C, and K.

Crispy Oat Crackers (turned into Valentine Treats)

1 cup chopped dates (Medjool are softest and work the best)

1/3 cup boiling water

Pour boiling water over chopped dates and let it set while making cracker dough.

1 cup hot water

1/4 cup avocado oil

1/4 cup honey

Shake hot water, oil and honey together well in a covered pint jar.

4 cups quick oats

1 cup unsweetened finely ground coconut (can use ground walnuts instead for higher protein with healthy omega-3 fats)

1 teaspoon salt

Mix quick oats, coconut and salt together in mixing bowl and pour hot water/oil/honey mixture over it, stirring well. Let set for 15 to 20 minutes. Press cracker dough onto waxed paper dusted with flour. Sprinkle rolling pin with flour and roll dough out on waxed paper to about 1/16 inch thick. Cut into heart shapes using cookie cutters. Bake at 325 on Pam-sprayed cookie sheets for 12 minutes or until golden brown. While crackers cool, mash the dates with fork or potato masher until smooth. Spread a thin layer of date mixture on a heart-shaped cookie and cover, sandwich style, with another cracker. Your kids will love this healthy valentine treat. You can use crackers made with ground walnuts instead of the ground coconut to make wonderful whole grain crackers and flavor them with onion and/or garlic powder mixed with the dry ingredients. They are wonderful crackers to take on a trip because they travel well and the healthy fat in the walnuts and fiber in the oatmeal stretches out the time it takes to metabolize so you can reach the destination of your next real meal without getting hungry.

Carrot Mango Ginger Smoothie

Ingredients:

1 cup fresh carrot juice (make your own or use Bolthouse bottle juice)

1 cup almond milk or hemp milk or soy milk

1 ½ cups diced, frozen mango

2 med. frozen bananas (freeze them in the skin and right before using, run them under hot water and the skins will easily slide off)

1-2 tsp. freshly grated ginger (or to taste)

Blend all the ingredients until smooth and creamy and serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

There are many basic health benefits of ginger: Gingerol is the main bioactive compound in ginger, responsible for much of its medicinal properties. It has both anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects and is also effectively used to treat nausea or gastric upset.

Easy Vegan Pesto

Ingredients

- 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves (large stems removed)
- 1/3 cup walnuts (oven toasted at 250 degrees for 15 minutes)
- 3 large cloves garlic (peeled)
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 3-4 Tbsp nutritional yeast (for a cheesy flavor)
- ½ tsp sea salt (plus more to taste)
- 2-3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 3-6 Tbsp water (plus more as needed)

Instructions

1. To a food processor or small blender, add the basil, nuts, garlic, lemon juice, nutritional yeast, and sea salt. Blend/mix on high until a loose paste forms.
2. Add olive oil a little at a time, streaming in while the machine is on, if possible. Scrape down the sides as needed.
3. Add water 1 tablespoon at a time until the desired consistency is reached—a thick but pourable sauce.

Tips

1. For a lower fat version, substitute vegetable broth or water for some or all of the oil
2. Leftovers can be covered and kept in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or frozen in ice cube molds and stored for a month or more.

This pesto can be prepared in 15 minutes. Though dairy free, it tastes cheesy and flavorful and can be made with less oil for a lower fat version. This is the perfect plant-based addition to Italian dishes, pasta, dressings, sauces, breads, and more!

Roasted Red Pepper and Walnut Dip

This dip, also known as Muhammara, shows off how well roasted red peppers and nuts pair up. Here, the nuts are walnuts and the spicing is distinctly middle eastern, with tangy-sweet concentrated pomegranate juice, lemon, and cumin. Serve it as a dip with toasted pita wedges or vegetables, or as a sandwich spread.

Makes 2 cups.

Ingredients:

4 tsp. pomegranate molasses

½ cup walnuts

3 Tbsp. plain dry bread crumbs

1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice

One 16-ounce jar roasted red peppers, drained and rinsed

¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)

¼ tsp. ground cumin, plus more for garnish

1 Tbsp. olive oil, plus 1 tsp. for garnish

Salt to taste

Instructions:

Toast the walnuts in a small dry skillet over medium-high heat until fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Set aside to cool.

Put the walnuts and bread crumbs in a food processor and process until finely ground. Add the reduced pomegranate juice or pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, red peppers, cayenne, and cumin and process until smooth. With the processor running, add 1 tablespoon of the oil through the feed tube in a thin stream. Season with salt. This will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Transfer the dip to a serving bowl. Sprinkle with cumin and the remaining 1 tsp. oil and serve.

This dip is served with bread in the middle eastern countries and Turkey. It is highly nutritious and tasty. You can make your own pomegranate syrup by simmering unsweetened pomegranate juice on low for 30 to 40 minutes. Walnuts are high in plant omega-3 fats and a small handful daily has been shown in a number of nutritional studies to have multiple health benefits to both the cardiovascular system and the brain.

Apple Gingerbread

1/2 cup pure maple syrup crystals (found in bins at Andy's Market)

1/4 cup Earth Balance margarine

1 egg, beaten (or egg replacer equivalent to 1 egg)

1/4 cup molasses

1 t. soda

1 t. cinnamon

1/2 t. ginger

1/2 cup whole wheat pastry flour + 1/2 cup unbleached flour

Pinch of salt

1 cup diced, peeled fresh apple

Cream together Earth Balance and margarine and maple syrup crystals. Add egg and mix well. Dissolve soda into the molasses and add to creamed mixture. Sift together all the dry ingredients and add to creamed mixture. Beat well, then stir in apples. Last of all add the boiling water and mix well. Pour into 8X8X2 square cake pan that has been sprayed with a non-stick oil. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes. Serve slightly warm with a dollop of TruWhip.

This is a fast and easy dessert that requires very little fat and uses natural sweeteners that are loaded with nutrition. It is moist and yummy. During peach season, I make it without the apples and serve it with sliced fresh peaches over the top with the TruWhip.

Cherry Cheesecake

1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

3 teaspoons finely grated fresh lemon zest

1/2 cup pure maple syrup crystals

1 package Garden Dessert Unflavored Jel (Andy's next to regular jello)

1 tablespoon Agar powder (Andy's carries Now brand)

1 2/3 cup cold water

2 teaspoons pure vanilla flavoring

1 small container Tofutti cream cheese (by the real cream cheese in Andy's)

One small container of TruWhip (Find in Andy's next to Cool Whip. Reserve this ingredient to be added after above Jel part of recipe has been cooked and cooled.)

Mix maple syrup crystals, Unflavored Jel, and Agar powder together.

Stir first 7 ingredients together in a sauce pan.

Place over a medium heat and cook until it boils for full two to three minutes. (stirring with wire whip constantly)

Remove from heat. Stir in the Tofutti cream cheese until it melts completely.

Place saucepan into an ice-water bath in the sink and continue to stir until cools lukewarm. (if you don't keep stirring every minute or two, it will start to get lumpy as it cools)

Spoon TruWhip into the lukewarm Jel/Tofutti cream cheese mixture and stir with wire whip until well mixed.

Pour into a pre-made pie crust or graham cracker pie crust. (you will have enough left over to use as yummy topping over fruit and waffles - or you can fill two 8-inch small pie crusts)

Cover and chill for several hours.

Top with fresh berries (I make a glaze with water and agave nectar thickened with cornstarch to pour over the berries) or use 1 can Wilderness Cherry Pie Filling. (Walmart carries a new brand without artificial colors or high-fructose syrup)

Chia Chocolate Pudding

1 cup of your favorite non-dairy milk

1/3 cup of chia seeds

Pinch of salt

1/4 cup organic cacao powder (found in Andy's bulk section)

4 pitted Medjool dates (or stevia powder to sweeten)

1 cup non-dairy whipped topping (optional)

Stir the chia seeds into the milk and let them soak and swell for at least 15 minutes, stirring again occasionally to keep the chia seeds from clumping. Put all ingredients in the blender and blend on high speed until very smooth. Let it set in the refrigerator for 4 hours and it will get even thicker. Fold in the whipped topping and put into 4 sherbet glasses. Top with 3 raspberries and a mint leaf.

This quick and easy chia pudding is loaded with Omega-3 fats which stimulate immune function when compared with Omega-6 oils that can depress immune function. The raw cacao powder is loaded with antioxidants.

Chocolate-dipped Frozen Bananas

3 medium-sized, ripe bananas

1/2 cup pineapple juice (reconstituted from frozen juice concentrate) or diluted lemon juice

6 popsicle sticks (can purchase at craft store)

Cut bananas in half crosswise and dip them in the pineapple juice to prevent browning. Spear a popsicle stick into the flat end of each halved banana. Place them on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and freeze for 90 minutes. Toward the end of the freezing process, make chocolate coating.

1/3 cup organic coconut oil, melted

1/2 cup organic cacao powder (can purchase from bins at Andy's)

1/3 cup agave nectar (or to taste)

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/8 teaspoon salt

Heat coconut oil over medium heat. Add the cocoa powder, agave nectar, vanilla and salt and continue to stir for another 4 to 5 minutes over very low heat. It best coats frozen bananas while it is still warm.

Place the chocolate dip in a shallow mixing bowl. Roll the frozen bananas in the chocolate dip (you may need to use a spatula to spread it evenly), and then roll them in finely-chopped walnuts. Place them back on the cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and freeze for another hour. Take them out just before serving so they can be eaten as a frozen treat.

This is a nutrient rich treat. Bananas are high in potassium, B-6, and even contain Vitamin C. The cacao is packed with antioxidant-rich flavonoids that reduce oxidative stress and is also high in magnesium. Walnuts are rich in omega-3 fats that are good for brain health and cardiovascular health.

Fresh Strawberry & Pudding Parfaits

1 can Wild Oats coconut milk

1/3 cup minute tapioca

3/4 cup non-dairy milk (soy or almond)

1/4 cup agave nectar or pure maple syrup

Pinch of salt

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

4 cups sliced fresh strawberries, sweetened with 1 - 2 tablespoons agave nectar and a few sprinkles of stevia.

Pour coconut milk and non-dairy milk into saucepan and sprinkle tapioca over the top. Add pinch of salt and mix well with wire whisk before placing over medium heat. Stir or whisk constantly until mixture reaches a full boil. Remove from heat and chill in refrigerator for at least 1 hour. May rapid chill by putting it in a sink with ice water first.

Layer pudding and strawberries alternately in tall crystal glasses, starting with pudding and ending with strawberries as a garnish.

Strawberries are a good source of vitamin C, manganese, folate (vitamin B9), and potassium. Nutrition research has linked strawberries to the following possible health benefits: improved blood antioxidant status which results in decreased oxidative stress, reduction in inflammation, improved vascular function and reduction in the harmful oxidation of LDL cholesterol.

Healthy Holiday Confections

3/4 cup orange juice (reserve 1/4 cup to be used over the chopped dates)
3 tablespoons Minute Tapioca
2 teaspoons butter flavoring
2 teaspoons vanilla
1 teaspoon orange zest (grate with extra-fine side of grater)
1/4 cup honey
3 large squares dark chocolate (such as Sam's Choice 80% cacao chocolate bar from Walmart, or substitute 3 heaping tablespoons of carob powder)
1 cup finely chopped Medjool dates
1 cup ground raw walnuts
1 cup raw almond flour (available in bins at Andy's)
1 cup unsweetened, extra fine grind coconut (available in bins at Andy's)

Combine 1/2 cup orange juice with tapioca, honey, butter flavoring, vanilla, and orange zest in a saucepan. Cook, stirring continuously, over medium heat until tapioca is clear, about 8 minutes. Reduce heat to very low and stir in the dark chocolate until it melts. Set aside.

Heat 1/4 cup remaining orange juice in a glass measuring cup in the microwave until it starts to boil, then pour it over the finely chopped dates. Let dates soak for a couple of minutes in hot orange juice and then mash with a fork until it forms a soft mass.

Put all ingredients into a bowl and stir well, then move mixture onto some waxed paper and knead it with your hands until it is well combined. Divide it into 6 even parts. Grease your hands with some oil or Earth Balance Buttery spread, then roll each segment into a 14-inch long, 1/2-inch-diameter log on a piece of waxed paper. Cut into 1-1/2-inch segments and roll each segment in a mixture of ground walnuts and almonds. Store in a Tupperware or holiday tin with waxed paper lining the bottom and separating each layer of candies. Keeps for several weeks in the refrigerator.

These delightful sweets are free of refined sugar.

Dates, a good source of potassium and magnesium, also contain calcium, numerous B-vitamins, and plenty of natural fiber. Nuts are rich in protein and healthy fats (omega-3 and mono-unsaturated), which will, with the soluble fiber in the tapioca root, slow down the release of the natural sugars into the bloodstream, helping to prevent a rapid rise in blood sugar for those with diabetes or glucose intolerance.

A handful of nuts daily has been shown to benefit cardiovascular and brain health. Dark chocolate is a good source of flavonoids, which are powerful antioxidants that protect our cells from damage caused by free radicals, those unstable oxygen molecules thought to be responsible for aging and degenerative disease processes. The higher the percent of cacao in the dark chocolate, the more concentrated it is in the protective flavonoids.

So satisfy your sweet tooth with these healthy holiday treats, but remember to limit to one or two pieces at a time to prevent holiday weight gain, as they do contain ingredients rich in both nutrients and calories.

Strawberry Rhubarb Pie

¼ cup flour

¼ tsp. salt

3 cups chopped rhubarb

3 cups sliced fresh strawberries (hint—tastes best with local fresh strawberries as they have much better flavor)

2/3 cup agave nectar

Two 9-inch oil pie crusts, unbaked

Mix flour and salt together and toss with rhubarb and strawberries. Stir in the agave nectar until well mixed. Place fruit mixture in the unbaked bottom crust in a pie pan. Cover with top crust. Pinch edges together to seal. Cut small slits in top crust. (you may also choose to cut the top crust into strips to make a lattice pie as these make a very attractive presentation). Place the pie onto a large baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes at 400 degrees. Turn the temperature down to 350 degrees and bake an additional 25 minutes. If you have a pie crust shield, place it on top to prevent the edges from browning too quickly. You can also cover the pie top completely with foil for the first 20 minute at the higher temperature and remove it when you turn the temperature down to 350 as this will also prevent browning before pie filling is cooked. You must fully cool this pie for 3 hours before serving so that it thickens and sets up well.

Triple Berry Pie

1 ½ cups sliced, unsweetened strawberries

½ cup water

½ cup agave nectar

¼ cup Non-GMO cornstarch

½ tsp. pure vanilla

2 cups unsweetened frozen wild blueberries (they are smaller and have more flavor like a huckleberry)

2 cups frozen unsweetened raspberries

1 9-inch pre-baked pie crust (use your favorite recipe for an oil crust and consider using virgin avocado oil, which is high in monounsaturated fats, you may use half whole wheat pastry flour)

Put the sliced strawberries in the blender with the water, agave nectar, cornstarch and vanilla. Blend on high until the berries are liquefied.

Put blended strawberry mixture into a 2-quart kettle and cook over medium heat, stirring often to prevent burning, until mixture has come to a full boil for at least 1 minute and the corn starch turns from milky to a clear red color.

Remove from heat and stir in the wild blueberries and raspberries. Keep stirring as the berries partially thaw in the hot liquids.

Pour into the baked pie shell and chill for 2-3 hours before serving. (Not cooking the frozen blueberries and raspberries helps prevent the loss of vitamin C)

Health benefits of this recipe: Agave nectar is far less acid-producing than refined white sugar. White sugar is highly acidic and when eaten in concentrated amounts is one of the worst foods to kick up arthritis pain. Remember that agave nectar is still a concentrated form of sweet that is high in calories and natural sugar which can impact your blood sugars, if you are diabetic. You can get by with only 1/3 cup of agave if you like a pie that is a bit more tart.

You can enjoy the health benefits of multiple phytochemicals in the berries found in this pie. Raspberries are rich in phytochemical activity, including flavonoids, quercetin, anthocyanins, ellagic acid, lutein and zeaxanthins. Blueberries are also loaded with anthocyanins and other phenolic compounds, and the wild ones contain higher concentrations of these powerful antioxidants.

Strawberries also contain high amounts of antioxidant rich micronutrients and phytochemicals, including vitamin C, phenolic compounds, carotenoids, anthocyanins and ellagic acid.

Analysis of the Framingham Offspring Cohort study (April 2011-April 2014) found that people who consumed more anthocyanin-rich foods (fruits and vegetables containing deep purple and dark red pigments) had lower concentrations of inflammatory chemicals and fewer markers of oxidative stress. Foods high in anthocyanins have also been shown to lower cholesterol levels and reduce blood clotting.