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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

September 2018

HARVEST TO THANKSGIVING, Part I:

Autumn Skillet

**Baked Chestnut Bread Stuffing
with Maple Oatmeal Bread**

Broiled Persimmon with English Cream

Scalloped Cauliflower

Everything comes down to a race to finish as we head for the holidays. My theory is that all this derives from our survival needs as a species to store our harvest. It seems to translate today less into canning, freezing, and dehydrating; it is now more about consumerism. As the advertisers announce the number of days to Christmas, panic sets in and there just does not seem to be enough time to explore and experiment. You may want to try something new but you keep putting it off until November and then are hesitant to experiment on the big day or time just gets away from you.

Beginning this month I would like to share harvest ideas for Thanksgiving and the gatherings that lead to and through the winter solstice, the gatherings that lead us through the period of darkness at the end of the year that we experience in the northern hemisphere. Known more accurately as the hibernal solstice, it was a period for humans to gather and hope, a period of fear that the sun “would not return” to allow for agriculture to perpetuate the communities of humans who no longer wandered. This fear spawned deities identified with life, death, and rebirth; it became the basis for religions. Monuments like Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain and *Machu Picchu* in Peru mark this astronomical event.

The stored harvest had to sustain early humans into the next growing season and harvest foods can inspire us too. If you only can or dehydrate a few fruits, freeze some vegetables, and dry herbs from your summer bounty, I guarantee that you will appreciate the world of your ancestors and your own world all the more.

Root vegetables can be found in many dishes that we include in our holiday menus. As I mentioned many times in my books, I grew up in a very northern climate during the 1940s when root cellars were a vital tool for families. We didn't dash into town for scallions . . . Soups, stews, roasted meats, even salads, depended on the supply of root vegetables, squashes, and fruits in winter storage. In my chapter on Saudi Arabia in *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*, volume I, I mentioned a root vegetable soup that I make, which I call Underground Soup. We often use that soup or a cream of potato and cauliflower soup as a first course for our Thanksgiving.

I have so many favorite salads but my choice for Thanksgiving more often than not will be either a Waldorf salad made with the wonderful New York State Cortland apples or a red lettuce salad made with red pears and a creamy *Gorgonzola* dressing.

Both pumpkin and cranberries are generally incorporated into the American Thanksgiving dinner. You will find many pumpkin- and cranberry-based dishes in my books but next month I will introduce a few others that will add to your Halloween and Thanksgiving repertoire and carry you on into the Christmas season with choices, maybe new choices.

This month I will share a few sides that can just be added to any everyday menu and a harvest entrée so that you can experiment and refine while you have time.



AUTUMN SKILLET

TPT - 1 hour

How beautifully and deliciously this skillet supper announces the season. The touch of maple syrup is a reminder of the long winter ahead during which, in the Algonquian tradition, the life force, the sap, drawn from the maple trees will sustain. We always try to serve this skillet meal just as the Rome Beauties are ready and before the frost catches the chrysanthemums.

Scalloped potatoes, ripe persimmons, and Indian Pudding** accompany this skillet meal well.*

2 cups water

8 (about 3/4 pound) small, white boiling onions—all approximately the same size—peeled

1 tablespoon butter

1 tablespoon pure maple syrup

2 tablespoons water

1/2 acorn squash—halved lengthwise, seeded, and sliced into 1-inch crescent-shaped slices

1 small baking apple—cut into thick wedges and cored—A Rome Beauty apple is our choice

2 tablespoons additive-free, raw cashew halves, for garnish

Home-grown, spray-free Chrysanthemum blossoms, for garnish, if available

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, bring the 2 cupfuls of water to the boil.

Meanwhile, cut a small, shallow **X** into the root end of each peeled onion to assure that the onions will not fall apart during cooking. Add prepared onions to *boiling* water and cook until *almost tender*—about 20 minutes. Drain well.

In a large skillet with cover, combine butter, maple syrup, and 2 tablespoonfuls water. Heat over *MEDIUM* heat until butter is melted. Arrange onions and squash crescents in syrup. Arrange apple wedges in a single layer on top of vegetables. Cover tightly and simmer for about 10 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking for an additional 15 minutes, or until tender, basting vegetables and apple wedges frequently with pan syrup.

Arrange apple wedges, squash slices, and onions separately on a large, deep serving platter which has been warmed. Drizzle pan syrup and juices over. Keep warm on a warming tray or in a warm oven, if not served immediately.

Garnish with cashew halves and Chrysanthemum blossoms just before serving.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people



Notes: *My scalloped potato recipe can be found in the *website archive*, March 2017.

**The Indian Pudding recipe that I make was included In *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*. See pages 670-71 of volume II.

This recipe is easily doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.9 g.; FAT = 5.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 13.7 g.;
CALORIES = 128; CALORIES FROM FAT = 37%

BAKED CHESTNUT BREAD STUFFING

TPT - 2 hours and 24 minutes

The Thanksgiving stuffing . . . Food safety dictates that you should always cook the stuffing outside of the bird so why not bake a stuffing for your holiday table then nobody can say, "But, don't you miss the stuffing?" Fresh chestnuts are available in grocery stores at this time of the year but, as I have noted, dried chestnuts can be substituted when necessary.

1/4 pound fresh, unpeeled chestnuts

Boiling water

1 cup trimmed whole wheat bread cubes made from a firm whole grain loaf such as MAPLE OATMEAL BREAD [see recipe which follows]

1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons chopped onion

1 tablespoon chopped shallot

1 medium celery rib—chopped

1/2 teaspoon very finely chopped fresh thyme or

1/8 teaspoon dried thyme—crushed

1/8 teaspoon ground allspice

Pinch ground sweet marjoram

Pinch poultry seasoning

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 teaspoon butter

2 ounces fresh mushrooms—trimmed, rinsed, cleaned well with a brush, and quartered*

Salt, to taste

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs

6 tablespoons vegetarian stock, of choice

Using a sharp knife, slice each chestnut in half. Drop into a saucepan of *boiling* water for 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove chestnut halves from the water one at a time. Using a kitchen towel, squeeze the nut from the shell. Scrape as much of seed coat off as possible. Drop the peeled nut into a bowl of *boiling* water. Allow shelled chestnuts to sit in the bowl of *boiling* water for about 35-40 minutes. Drain thoroughly and rinse well with cold water. Allow to cool. Cut them into quarters and set aside until required.**

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.



Spread bread cubes on a cookie sheet. Toast bread in preheated oven, turning and stirring frequently, until bread cubes are *lightly browned*. *Be careful not to allow bread to overbrown*. Remove from oven and set aside until required.

Prepare a 1-quart oven casserole, with cover, by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add chopped onion, shallots, and celery. Sauté until onions and shallots are soft, *allowing none of the vegetables to brown*.

Remove from heat and turn into a large mixing bowl. Add *very finely* chopped thyme, ground allspice and sweet marjoram, poultry seasoning, and black pepper. Mix *gently*, but *thoroughly*. Add *toasted* bread cubes and again mix *gently*, but *thoroughly*. Set aside briefly.

In the skillet again set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Add mushroom pieces and sauté until mushrooms are browned and almost all liquid in pan has been evaporated. Add the prepared chestnut pieces to the mushrooms. Season lightly with salt. Add to bread mixture. Toss.

Add chopped parsley. Toss.***

Using a fork, mix pasteurized eggs into stock. Add to stuffing mixture and toss *gently* to moisten.

Turn into prepared casserole, cover, and bake in preheated 325 degree F. oven for about 45 minutes. *Do not allow to dry!* Stir in a small amount of vegetable stock to moisten, if necessary.

Turn into heated serving bowl before serving.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2-4 people

Notes: *Reconstituted dried mushrooms can be used in this recipe. The earthy complexity of the dried mushroom taste actually elevates this dish.

**Chestnuts may be prepared a day in advance and refrigerated until required. If preferred, they may also be oven-roasted for this dish or rehydrated dried chestnuts can be substituted.

***For convenience, this recipe may be prepared to this point as much as two days ahead of time. Cover and refrigerate.

When required, this recipe can be doubled.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.9 g.; FAT = 2.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 8.8 g.;
CALORIES = 109; CALORIES FROM FAT = 21%

(BREAD MACHINE) MAPLE OATMEAL BREAD

TPT - about 3 hours and 34 minutes;
3 hours and 30 minutes = automated machine
preparation period*

There are supposedly 148 species of maple trees, but the Algonquians of my native upstate New York home found the only two that produce the syrup for maple sugar—the sugar maple and the black maple. The syrup that they drew from these trees was called something that phonetically sounds like “sinzibuckwud” and roughly translates to “drawn from the wood.” In their tradition, the life force of the tree was transferred from the tree through the maple syrup and they, therefore, were in communion with the spirits of nature.

It is fitting that we should use this life force drawn from nature to provide the food for the yeast that raises our bread. This is our favorite daily bread. It is evenly textured and a good choice as a dinner bread with butter or for sandwiches and toast, especially cinnamon toast.

1 1/4 cups plus 1 tablespoon warm water
1/3 cup pure maple syrup
1 tablespoon safflower *or* sunflower oil

1 cup quick-cooking rolled oats (*not instant*)
2 3/4 cups bread flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 teaspoon salt

2 1/2 teaspoons *preservative-free* active dried yeast**

Bring all ingredients except warm water to room temperature.

Put water, maple syrup, and oil into the BREAD MACHINE pan.

Add rolled oats, bread and whole wheat flours, and salt, spreading the ingredients over the liquid as you add them. *Do not stir.*

Using a spoon, create a depression in the dry ingredients, being very careful not to press down into the liquid layer below. Pour yeast into the depression.

Select BASIC SETTING. Set CRUST CONTROL at medium. Push START.

Yields one 1 1/2-pound loaf
—about 20 slices

Notes: *Preparation time depends, of course, on the brand of bread machine which you are using. I use a Zojirushi bread machine.

**An envelope of active dried yeast contains about 1 tablespoonful. Some packaged dried yeast available in grocery stores contain a preservative. Natural food stores carry an additive-free dried yeast. In addition, *do not use so-called fast action yeasts.* The results will not please you.

(BREAD MACHINE) MAPLE OAT CINNAMON BREAD is an excellent variation of this loaf. It is fragrant and delicious, but unlike most commercial baked cinnamon products, it is not excessively sweet. Add 1 to 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls of ground cinnamon to the bread pan as you add the flours.

1/20 SERVING (i. e., per slice) –
PROTEIN = 3.2 g.; FAT = 1.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.9 g.;
CALORIES = 109; CALORIES FROM FAT = 10%



BROILED PERSIMMON WITH ENGLISH CREAM

TPT - 21 minutes

There are two varieties of persimmon generally available in our markets. Fuyu are a sweet, flat-bottomed variety that can be eaten out-of-hand while still quite firm. Hachiya, on the other hand, are a larger, heart-shaped variety with a rounded base which must be fully ripened, almost to a mushy state, to be sweet. The fruit of the Hachiya is sweet when ripened but it is more astringent than is the fruit of the Fuyu. Fuyu persimmons make a unusual dessert or a dramatic garnish while providing vitamins C, B6, K, and beta-carotene. It is also a source of phytochemicals and an excellent source of magnesium.

We love berries and Fuyu persimmons are no exception so we routinely double this recipe.

ENGLISH CREAM:

2 teaspoons mascarpone cheese
1 teaspoon fat-free sour cream
3 drops pure vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon freshly squeezed lime juice

1 ripe Fuyu persimmon—sliced in half crosswise
1 1/2 teaspoons honey

1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lime juice



Set broiler rack about 6 inches below coil. Preheat broiler to 400 degrees F.

In a small bowl, combine *mascarpone* cheese, sour cream, vanilla extract, and 1/2 teaspoonful lime juice. Mix well. Turn into a serving dish. Set aside until required.

Place halved persimmon, cut-side-up, in a baking pan. Drizzle each half with honey. Broil until browned and caramelized—about 9-10 minutes. *Be careful not to allow honey to burn.* Remove from oven.

Sprinkle the remaining teaspoonful of lime juice over the broiled persimmon halves.

Serve with prepared English cream.

Yields 2 servings
adequate for 2 people as a garnish

Note: This recipe is easily increased to serve as many as you wish.

1/2 SERVING (per half) –
PROTEIN = 1.0 g.; FAT = 1.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 21.5 g.;
CALORIES = 62; CALORIES FROM FAT = 17%

SCALLOPED CAULIFLOWER

TPT - 26 minutes

During the years of the World Wars and on into the 1950s scalloped vegetables were an economical way to deal with dried bread and stale crackers. Buttered crumbs appeared atop everything. Unfortunately, the crumbs were often added to moisture-laden foods before baking and those soggy bread and cracker crumbs did nothing to improve the menu. If vegetables are cooked or baked, turned into a casserole or a serving dish and then topped with sautéed, buttered crumbs, you have a vegetable dish that allows the crunch of the breadcrumbs to contrast with the vegetable texture. I whiz bread in the food processor and store the crumbs in plastic bags so that there is always a supply of breadcrumbs in the freezer.



If you serve these for a holiday meal, the beautiful orange cauliflower, developed at Cornell University, should be available. Not only is this vegetable gorgeous, it adds some vitamin A to your meal and some color to your table.

1 1/2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup breadcrumbs
1 1/2 tablespoons grated *pecorino Romano* cheese

4 large cauliflower florets
1/2 cup *boiling* water
2 tablespoons butter

In a small skillet set over *LOW* heat, melt 1 1/2 tablespoonfuls butter. Add breadcrumbs and grated cheese. Sauté gently until crumbs are lightly browned.



Meanwhile, in a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine cauliflower florets, *boiling* water, and 2 tablespoonfuls butter. Cover and butter-steam the cauliflower florets for about 13 minutes. Turn into a heated shallow serving dish. Set the cauliflower florets on their bases so that the flower surfaces face upwards.*

Sprinkle buttered crumbs over.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: To save yourself time on a busy day, prepare the cauliflower and refrigerate until just before serving. Prepare the buttered crumbs and set aside until required. Slide the cauliflower into a 200 degree F. oven for about 10 minutes during which time you can reheat the breadcrumbs over *LOW* heat.

This recipe can easily be doubled or tripled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., per floret) –
PROTEIN = 3.8 g.; FAT = 10.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.3 g.;
CALORIES = 166; CALORIES FROM FAT = 58%



*Do stop by next month as we continue to explore recipes
that might just include a choice or two for your holiday table,*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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