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

July 2019

THAT ELUSIVE SMOKY TASTE

Broccoli – Shallot Soup with Smoked *Gouda*

Mexican Corn and Cheese Salad

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

Smoked Paprika *Vinaigrette*

Smoky *Orzo* and Sausage Skillet

Spanish Chick Pea and “Pork” Skillet

Have you ever wondered why we like smoky foods? Why do we still head for the backyard to grill our food? Is it a response to a species instinct? Perhaps our ancestors, when they discovered that fire could be controlled and could be transported to their cave or camp site, learned that fire could be used to keep them warm and to ward off predators. Does the smell of smoke still symbolize security? There was no need to sleep in trees anymore for safety; a fire at the entrance to your cave allowed you to sleep on the ground. Bipedalism was, therefore, enhanced and with knowledge of fire they could then migrate into colder, northern climates.

How they learned to cook is the speculation of all who visit this period of our evolution. Surely they had seen fires and had learned to visit fire sites as a way to catch small mammals and birds as the animals fled the fire. Other animals practiced this technique; why not early humans. Picking up an animal that had died in a fire but which was still edible may have introduced them to the softness and the new taste of a “cooked” animal. Birds’ eggs may have cooked in the shells by the fire; they may have tried them. Early humans eventually used fire to improve the food supply. Cooking allowed for the introduction of more foods into the diets of humans and softer, cooked foods allowed for the ingestion of more calories with less expenditure of energy. The fibrous, tough parts of animals and plants, gathered by the family group or community, were now edible. Plants and animals that could not be eaten raw became part of the diet.

We still seem to relish sitting in front of a fireplace or around a fire pit; we still smoke our food. But that raises another question – how do we tolerate all the toxins in that smoke?

Ancient humans had little choice if they were to stay safe in their caves and if they were going to cook food. A group of researchers published a most fascinating paper in 2016 in which they suggest that a gene mutation which could permit toxins to be metabolized safely is found in *homo sapiens* but not found in the genome of early hominids such as Neanderthals and Denisovans. Some of those toxins against which we seem to be protected to



some extent by our genes can be found in smoke. This species mutation could decrease the risk of respiratory infections and the suppression of the immune system by those toxins. Therefore, natural selection would eventually produce a population with this mutation and this survival advantage. Research, as limited as it must be because of the lack of early hominid DNA, does suggest that this mutation began to appear as *homo sapiens* became successful.

If you have a wood fire grill, you can deliver that smoky flavor to plant-based foods. Also, you don't have to search for a gourmet, wood-fired pizzeria; you can prepare your own pizza on your backyard grill. Oven-roasting and pan-grilling vegetables can add that smoky, roasted nuance; roasting tomatoes and peppers brings out wonderful flavors. Other tools are smoked cheeses, liquid smoke, and smoked paprika. These are explored in the recipes which follow.

BROCCOLI – SHALLOT SOUP WITH SMOKED GOUDA

TPT - about 2 hours

I figure if I'm going to the trouble to make a batch of soup, I might just as well make a big one. The base for this soup can be so easily frozen, a great convenience for holiday meals or when we just say to friends, "Come over for supper. I just made a kettle of soup." Rather than the cream soups that my family has always made that use cream to finish off the soup I usually follow the Italian tradition using cheese. The smoky nuances in this soup come from two sources—the addition of Spanish smoked paprika and smoked Gouda cheese. My favorite smoked Gouda is imported from Germany but I had to taste a few and read quite a few labels to find a favorite.



1 tablespoon butter
1 cup dry croutons

6 cups broccoli stems, trimmings, and florets
—coarsely chopped
6 large shallot cloves—coarsely chopped
6 cups water
1/8 teaspoon Spanish *smoked* paprika
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 quart *boiling* water
4 medium potatoes—peeled and diced

1 1/2 cups shredded *smoked* Gouda cheese
Drizzle of white wine vinegar

Melt butter in a skillet over *MEDIUM* heat. Add dry croutons and, while stirring frequently, allow bread to absorb butter and brown. Remove from heat. Set aside until required.

Reserve a few small broccoli florets for garnish.

In a kettle set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, combine chopped broccoli and shallots, 6 cupfuls water, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to *LOW-MEDIUM* and cook for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Set aside to cool.

In a large saucepan, cook diced potato in the 1 quart *boiling* water for 20 minutes, or until soft. Drain.

Using the electric blender or the food processor fitted with steel knife, purée broccoli mixture with cooked potatoes in small batches. Turn into sieve, a *chinoise* sieve if available, and press through.* Discard residue or reserve for stock pot.

In a large saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat broccoli-potato purée. Gradually whisk in spoonfuls of shredded cheese. Drizzle a bit of white wine vinegar over. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary. Cook, stirring frequently, until heated through.

Turn into a heated soup tureen and serve into heated soup bowls. Garnish each serving a few reserved broccoli florets and a portion of the sautéed croutons.

Yields about 7 cupfuls
adequate for 7 people as a first course serving

Notes: *This purée may be frozen in batches convenient to your menu plans. Defrost completely before proceeding.

If preferred, this recipe can be halved.

1/7 SERVING (i. e., per cupful) –
PROTEIN = 10.1 g.; FAT = 10.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.1 g.;
CALORIES = 200; CALORIES FROM FAT = 46%

MEXICAN CORN AND CHEESE SALAD

Esquites

TPT - 17 minutes

This is the way I have always made this classic Mexican salad since I am not as appreciative of hot peppers in my corn salad as are so many Mexicans. Note that this salad is not part of the border cuisine with which most North Americans are familiar. It is one of the reasons I urged my readers in, "A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul," to head down into Mexico to explore the cuisine. There is an unmistakable flavor complexity in this salad that is really wonderful. If I have ears of corn, I char the corn for this salad on the grill pan before cutting it from the cob. The charred taste is an important part of the taste memory that will linger. I add smoked paprika to emphasize that smoky nuance.

Since this salad can be prepared early in the day and refrigerated, it is a clear choice for me on a busy day. We pair it with a legume-based soup and add palate-clearing fruit, such as oranges, for dessert.

1 1/2 cups corn kernels—green (fresh) or frozen
1 teaspoon safflower or sunflower oil

1 tablespoon light dairy sour cream
1 tablespoon reduced-calorie or light mayonnaise
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice
1/4 teaspoon crushed, dried oregano
1/8 teaspoon chili powder
Pinch ground red pepper (cayenne)
Pinch Spanish smoked paprika

1 small garlic clove—crushed and very finely chopped
2 tablespoons crumbled feta cheese*
2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander (cilantro) leaves
1 small scallion—both white and green portions—very finely sliced

On a grill pan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, scatter corn kernels. Drizzle oil over. Cook, stirring constantly, until corn is beginning to char. Transfer to a bowl to cool.

In a mixing bowl, combine sour cream, mayonnaise, lime juice, *crushed* oregano, chili powder, ground red pepper (cayenne), and *smoked* paprika. Stir to combine.

Add *very finely* chopped garlic, crumbled *feta*, chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*), scallion slices, and pan-charred corn. Gently fold together. Turn into a serving bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Bring to room temperature before serving.



Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: *In Mexico, *cotija* cheese is generally used to make this salad. *Feta* is readily available and contributes the same saltiness and tartness.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.9 g.; FAT = 5.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 24.4 g.;
CALORIES = 149; CALORIES FROM FAT = 32%

ROASTED RED PEPPER SAUCE

Rouille

TPT - 1 hour and 14 minutes

That elusive smoky taste can be delivered by the simple oven-roasting of a sweet ripe red pepper. In the French province of Provence, a classic rouille is a red sauce made from olive oil, garlic, saffron, chili peppers, and breadcrumbs. A more modern version of this sauce can be prepared without the breadcrumbs using mayonnaise and roasted red peppers. Rouille is traditionally used to garnish fish but as a garnish for soy meat and fish analogue products or vegetables dishes it is worthy of your repertoire. It makes a great dip for oven-roasted potato wedges and a nice change of pace as a sandwich spread.



1 tablespoon garlic oil*
Pinch saffron

1 red bell pepper—well-washed

3 tablespoons *calorie-reduced or light mayonnaise***
1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper (cayenne), or to taste
1/8 teaspoon Spanish smoked paprika, or more to taste

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine garlic oil and saffron. Allow to heat for 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and turn into the work bowl of the food processor, fitted with steel knife.

Place red pepper on a cookie sheet. Roast in preheated oven for about 40 minutes, *turning frequently*. Remove from oven to a heavy brown paper bag in a dry sink. Roll the top of the bag down and allow to steam for about 15 minutes. Remove stems, seeds, and membranes of roasted red peppers, peel, and coarsely chop.

Add chopped roasted red pepper to garlic oil in work bowl of food processor with mayonnaise, ground red pepper (cayenne), and Spanish smoked paprika. Process until smooth. Turn into a serving dish. Refrigerate until ready to serve but for no more than an hour since the sauce will separate.

Yields 1/2 cupful



Notes *Rather than using a commercially-available garlic oil, you can make your own using the recipe on p. 694 of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Soul*, Volume II.

**Commercial mayonnaise is preferable to use in making this sauce because it is more stable and less likely to separate.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., about 2 tablespoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 0.4 g.; FAT = 6.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.5 g.;
CALORIES = 70; CALORIES FROM FAT = 85%



SMOKED PAPRIKA *VINAIGRETTE*

TPT - 3 minutes

Here is another way to add that smoky taste to your meal. Our favorite way to introduce this dressing to a salad is to marinate one element of the salads, like baby pepper rings, and then add them to a well-rinsed mixture of power greens with onion—simple and tasty. It is also a wonderful touch for tomato slices. The addition of a bit of mayonnaise gives the dressing a bit of body and helps to maintain the suspension.

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 1/2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon calorie-reduced or light mayonnaise
1 large shallot—very finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard with wine
1/4 teaspoon Spanish smoked paprika
1/8 teaspoon granulated sun-dried tomatoes
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a jar with a tightly fitting lid, combine oil, vinegar, mayonnaise, *very-finely* chopped shallot, mustard, *smoked* paprika, *granulated* sun-dried tomatoes, salt, and pepper. Tightly seal. Shake vigorously.

Yields 7 tablespoonfuls

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/14 SERVING (i. e., 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 0.01 g.; FAT = 3.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 0.1 g.;
CALORIES = 29; CALORIES FROM FAT = 96%



SMOKY *ORZO* AND SAUSAGE SKILLET

TPT - 24 minutes

The hints of smoke make this simple skillet less than common and very satisfying.

1 cup vegetarian stock of choice
1/2 cup *dry orzo* pasta
1 large garlic clove—crushed *but not chopped*
2 drops liquid smoke*

**1 orange baby sweet bell pepper—cored, seed,
and *thinly* sliced**
**1 red baby sweet bell pepper—cored, seeded,
and *thinly* sliced**
1/4 cup canned, *petite-diced* tomatoes
1/8 teaspoon Spanish *smoked* paprika

1 large vegetarian sausage (about 3 ounces)**

1/4 cup *mozzarella* pearls

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat stock until it reached the simmer. Reduce the heat to *LOW-MEDIUM*.

Add *orzo*, crushed garlic clove, and liquid smoke. Stir. Cover tightly and allow to cook for 12 minutes, until *orzo* is al dente. Stir occasionally. Remove and discard garlic clove.

Add orange and red pepper slices, crushed tomatoes, and smoked paprika. Cook, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. Stir frequently and add water, by the spoonfuls, if necessary to prevent sticking.

Add sausage slices. Cook, stirring frequently, until heated through.

Scatter *mozzarella* pearls across the surface and *allow to melt into little pools*. *DO NOT STIR*.

Serve at once directly from skillet.

Yields 4 servings

Notes *Choose a liquid smoke product that is a simple mesquite smoke distillate, one that does not contain a list of chemicals with which you are uncomfortable.

 **My preference is for an apple-sage grain sausage link or a vegetarian *chorizo* sausage.

This recipe can be doubled, when required. Be sure to choose a skillet large enough to accommodate the doubled quantity.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 10.1 g.; FAT = 4.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.7 g.;
CALORIES = 142; CALORIES FROM FAT = 29%

SPANISH CHICK PEA AND “PORK” SKILLET

Garbanzos con Carne de Cerdo

TPT - 38 minutes

When we visited Seville, Spain, we noticed how the dishes we encountered so often were a blend of the cultural diversity that is Spain. This dish, made with pork, is traditionally served over couscous, the pasta product introduced by the North African followers of Islam who invaded Spain in 711 A.D. and spread their influence across Spain to the Pyrenees. Their influence continued even after their expulsion in 1492 A.D. especially in southern and eastern Spain. Neither the Moors nor the large Jewish population would have used pork in this skillet meal but as the dish evolved in Andalusia, pork was added. We serve this over steamed whole wheat couscous or orzo, mixed grain pilaf, or barley.

Products are constantly being introduced by creative companies focusing on the ever-expanding demand for meatless meal makers. “Pork bites” do not taste like pork, or as far as I can remember, but this product is an interesting variation to consider.

5 ounces frozen, vegetarian “pork bites”

2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
1/3 cup chopped onion
2 garlic cloves—*finely* chopped

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon Spanish *smoked* paprika

3/4 cup canned, *diced* tomatoes
1/2 cup canned chick peas (*garbanzos*)—well-rinsed and seed coats removed

1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons *well-rinsed* fresh parsley--chopped



Coat a skillet with non-stick lecithin spray coating. Set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat. Sauté “pork bites” until lightly browned. Remove from heat and set aside briefly.

In a second skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add chopped onion and *finely* chopped garlic. Sauté until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful to allow neither the onion nor the garlic to brown.*

Add ground cumin and smoked paprika. Stir for a minute or two to release essential oils.

Add diced tomatoes and chickpeas (*garbanzos*). Cook, stirring frequently, for about 15 minutes.

Add sautéed “pork bites.” Cook until heated through. Stir frequently.

Turn into a heated serving bowl or serve directly from the skillet, if preferred. Garnish with lemon juice and chopped fresh parsley.

Serve at once over steamed *couscous* or *orzo*, a *pilaf*, or barley.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 6.3 g.; FAT = 3.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 9.1 g.;
CALORIES = 99; CALORIES FROM FAT = 29%

*Oh, I forgot to mention the smoky pleasure of an ear of corn
charred on the grill or on the grill pan.
Corn can be a useful part of the nutritional plan of your vegetarian menus
and so, if you drop by next month,
I'll share some of the ways we enjoy the nutrition of corn.*



Judy

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

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