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

**January 2017**

**EXPERIENCING UMAMI**

**Vietnamese Noodles with Straw Mushrooms  
And Spinach**

**Broccoli Florets with Layered Cheeses**

**Kenyan Fried Sweetpotatoes with Tomatoes**

***Linguine* with Vegetarian Sea Sauce**

**Russian Carrot *Rissoles***

With recognition of a fifth taste sensation, that taste that is not salt, not sweet, not sour, and not bitter, foods that elicit that different taste sensation, known as *umami*, can easily enhance taste pleasure in any meal. We now recognize that we have five categories of taste receptors that distinguish saltiness, sweetness, sourness, bitterness, and *umami*. Kikuna Ikeda of Tokyo Imperial University coined the name for this sensation, umami, in 1908. It combines the Japanese word *umai* for delicious and the Japanese *mi* for taste. He identified it in *kombu dashi*, a flavorful clear broth made with *kombu* seaweed. In 1913 his disciple Professor Shintaro Kodama identified another substance in dried bonito flakes, which produces the same *umami*. In 1957 Akira Kuninaka found that the ribonucleotide guanosine monophosphate (GMP) initiated the same taste

sensation. So mushrooms were added to the list. He also identified a synergistic relationship between ribonucleotides and the amino acid glutamate in heightening the *umami* sensation. It took a long, long time for the scientific community to accept Professor Ikeda's theory of a taste response for glutamate distinct from saltiness. I do not remember a single reference to these findings nor to any support for this fifth taste sensation during my college or teaching years.

Meats, poultry, fish, and shellfish are commonly cited as prime sources of the glutamates that initiate this sensation but sea vegetables like kelp and *kombu* and many terrestrial vegetables are also sources of *umami*—tomatoes, mushrooms, soybeans and soy products such as *tofu*, soy meat analogue products, fermented foods and sauces, spinach, celery, roasted peppers, and carrots. Soy sauce and green tea are also rich sources as are members of the cabbage family such as broccoli and Chinese cabbage, which makes *kim chi* all the more satisfying to those who love the Korean cabbage pickle. And, do you know why a baked sweetpotato is so satisfying? Glutamate is present and *umami* is the result.

One of the easiest ways to begin this exploration is with a well-aged chunk of *grana* such as *parmigiano-reggiano* or *pecorino Romano*. Don't turn to the green box; go out of your way to find a cheese exported from Italy and grate just what you need. An easy *soufflé* from Moldova can be found on p. 287 of Volume I of *A Worldwide Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*. It is a simple *soufflé* that takes only sixty-seven minutes, so simple, in fact, it is a useful middle-of-the-week family dinner entrée. Eggs, as well as cheese, contain *umami*-responsive elements so this *soufflé* really delivers *umami* pleasure. Just sprinkling grating cheese over a lemon-dressed salad of mixed greens and onion slivers is another easy introduction. Add diced ripe tomato or roasted red pepper strips and you have doubled the *umami* taste sensation. Plane off big curls of grating cheese and top a salad, a soup, a *crostini*, or a casserole.

Tomatoes and cheese and broccoli and mushrooms make a pizza one of those dishes in which most people can identify "delicious taste" but not really know why. Instead of stopping for "a slice," as a New Yorker would say, you might think of it as stopping for an "*umami* fix." It is described as a taste which coats the tongue with a sensation often described as meaty or as that of a rich broth.

## VIETNAMESE NOODLES WITH STRAW MUSHROOMS AND SPINACH

TPT - 16 minutes

*Typical of the complex seasoning of Vietnamese cooking, this noodle dish, featuring flour noodles rather than the more commonly used rice noodles, is a good way to explore the very Asian roots of a cuisine forever changed by Western influences.*

**1/2 cup vegetable stock, of choice or water\***  
**4 teaspoons corn starch**

**1/4 cup commercially-available duck sauce\***  
**2 tablespoons *tamari* soy sauce\***  
**1 tablespoon VIETNAMESE SPICING**

**MIXTURE\*\*\***

**2 quarts boiling water**  
**4 ounces Japanese curly egg noodles (*chuka soba*) or**  
**Chinese curly flour noodles (*mi dai chung*)\*\***

**18 baby spinach leaves—well-washed**

**1 can (15 ounces) *peeled*, whole straw mushrooms**  
**—well-drained\*\***



In a small bowl, stir corn starch into stock. When well-combined, add duck sauce, soy sauce, and spice mixture. Set sauce ingredients aside until required.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, cook curly noodles in *boiling* water for 3 minutes. Turn into a fine sieve set over the sink. Rinse under *cold* running water to stop further cooking. Drain.

Stir sauce ingredients to keep corn starch in suspension. In a wok set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat corn starch sauce mixture, stirring constantly. Add spinach leaves and *stir-fry* for about 30 seconds. Add drained, cooked noodles and drained straw mushrooms. *Stir-fry* until heated through and sauce is thickened.

Turn out onto heated platter.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 6 servings  
adequate for 4 people

Notes: \*THAI DARK VEGETABLE STOCK, a recipe for which can be found on pp. 431-432 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*, is the perfect vegetable stock for this recipe.

\*\*These ingredients are available in Asian groceries, natural food stores, and, increasingly, in grocery stores.

\*\*\*A complex, Vietnamese-inspired spicing mixture, consisting of cumin, coriander, lemongrass, paprika, turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, and salt, can be found on p. 442 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*.

When required, this recipe can be halved or doubled.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.4 g.; FAT = 1.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 27.5 g.;  
CALORIES = 125; CALORIES FROM FAT = 13%

## **BROCCOLI FLORETS WITH LAYERED CHEESES**

TPT - 36 minutes

*Since this is quickly assembled, quickly prepared, and benefits from those extra minutes on the warming tray, we find this to be a perfect holiday dish. When we are running in circles with last minute reductions, careful additions of cream to the soup, monitoring the biscuits, and setting up for the desserts to follow, the broccoli sits there serene and ready to go. It is a no-muss, no-fuss umami star.*

**4 cups fresh broccoli florets\***

**1/4 cup shredded (about 1 ounce) sharp Cheddar  
cheese**

**1 tablespoon grated *pecorino Romano* or Parmesan  
cheese, as preferred**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a 1 1/2-quart shallow oven-to-table baking dish by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Set up steamer.

Steam fresh broccoli florets until *crisp-tender*—about 8 minutes. Turn into a colander to drain. Plunge into *cold* water to prevent further cooking. Drain thoroughly.

Spread *one-half* of cooked broccoli in a layer over the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle *one-half* of the shredded Cheddar cheese, *one-half* of the grated Romano cheese, and a sprinkling of black pepper. Then, layer the remaining broccoli, shredded Cheddar cheese, grated Romano cheese, and a final sprinkling of black pepper.\*\*

Bake in preheated 350 degree F. oven for about 15 minutes, or only until cheese melts.

Keep warm on a warming tray until ready to serve.



Yields 6 servings  
adequate for 4 people

Notes: \*If you wish to use frozen broccoli florets, do not steam but instead plunge the florets into *boiling* water for just 1 minute. Immediately plunge the broccoli into *cold* water. Drain thoroughly, pat dry any excess moisture, and proceed as for fresh broccoli.

\*\*This recipe may be prepared in advance to this point early in the day and refrigerated until just before dinner. Oven heating time may have to be extended if casserole is not brought to room temperature before baking.

When required, this recipe may be halved or doubled.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.0 g.; FAT = 2.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 4.0 g.;  
CALORIES = 45; CALORIES FROM FAT = 42%

## KENYAN FRIED SWEETPOTATOES WITH TOMATOES

TPT - about 45 minutes

*As I stood in the produce section of my local grocery store in Central Pennsylvania trying to pick out a large sweetpotato for this dish, a lady quipped, “Oh, at this price, wouldn’t a baked yam taste good tonight?” I was sure that she could not accept the fact that sweetpotatoes are not potatoes but instead a close relative of the morning glory vine and that true yams are a starchy tuber of Old World, not New World, origin which is scaly, hairy, and not at all sweet any more than she could conceive of frying sweetpotatoes with tomatoes, let alone seasoning them with chili powder, so I replied, “Yes, I guess it would.” She then said, “How long will it take you to bake that big round thing?” I was trapped so I admitted that I was going to boil it and then fry the slices using a recipe from “Tastes of Kenya” by Kathy Eldon and Eamon Mullan. She muttered a small “harrumph” and walked away with her four perfectly matched sweetpotatoes which would be baked and ready at the same time. Never a dull moment in the opinionated world of food . . .*

*The large slices of sweetpotato present very attractively.*

**4 quarts *boiling* water**  
**2 large sweetpotatoes—well-scrubbed and peeled**

**3 tablespoons butter**

**1 cup canned, *diced* tomatoes**  
**1/2 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

In a large kettle set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, boil sweetpotatoes in *boiling* water until the sweetpotatoes are *firm-tender*. Drain and slice into big slices.\*

In a large non-stick-coated skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Add sweetpotato slices and brown on both sides.



Add diced tomatoes. Season with chili powder, salt, and black pepper. Allow to heat through, stirring occasionally. Transfer to a shallow, heated serving dish. Keep warm on a warming tray until ready to serve.

Yields 6 servings  
adequate for 4 people

Notes: \*For ease in slicing, refrigerate cooked sweetpotatoes for 1 hour before peeling and slicing, if you have time.

This recipe can be halved, when required.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.5 g.; FAT = 5.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 109; CALORIES FROM FAT = 49%

## **LINGUINE WITH VEGETARIAN SEA SAUCE**

# *Linguine con Salsa di Mare*

TPT - 2 hours;  
36 minutes = broth preparation;  
1 hour = flavor development period

*Linguine with white clam sauce was a favorite dish of ours when we were first married. We lived near the ocean; the oceans of the planet were cleaner. I just never thought to try and replicate the taste until decades later when I began to work with sea vegetables. The tiny bits of mushroom took care of the texture and my sea broth brought the briny memory to life again.*

### **SEA BROTH:**

**1 quart water**  
**About 1/4 cup dried *kombu*\***  
**2 scallions—trimmed, well-rinsed, and chopped**

**1 teaspoon fresh tarragon**  
**1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice**

**1 cup SEA BROTH** [see above]  
**1/2 cup white wine**  
**3 pieces (2 x 2-inch) dried kombu seaweed**  
**1 small garlic clove—very finely chopped**  
**1 portobello mushroom cap or the equivalent in white field (*Agaricus*) mushrooms—very finely chopped**

**3 quarts boiling water**  
**1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice**  
**3-inch piece of lemon zest**  
**1/2 pound high protein linguine**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**  
**1/4 cup chopped fresh, Italian flat-leafed parsley**  
**2 tablespoons pine nuts (*pignoli*)**

**Grated *pecorino Romano* cheese**

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine water, dried seaweed, and scallions. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to *LOW* and simmer for about 20 minutes. Remove seaweed and set aside to add to a stir-fry or the stock pot.



Add the tarragon and lemon, return to the heat, and simmer for 10 minutes more. Strain through a fine sieve before using as a clear broth soup or as an ingredient in a recipe. [This recipe yields about 3 cupfuls.]\*\*

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine 1 cupful of sea broth, white wine, seaweed pieces, very finely chopped garlic, and very finely chopped mushroom. Allow to come to the boil. Remove immediately from heat and set aside for 1 hour to allow for flavor development.

Remove seaweed pieces. Chop finely. Return to broth–mushroom sauce mixture.

Add 1 tablespoonful of lemon juice and the strip of lemon zest to boiling water set over *HIGH* heat. Add linguine. Cook according to package directions. Drain well. Place pasta in a large skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat.

Add broth–mushroom sauce and finely chopped seaweed. Simmer until sauce is reduced by about one-half. Turn into heated serving bowl.

Season with pepper. Add chopped fresh parsley and pine nuts (*pignoli*). Toss.

Serve at once with grated cheese.

Yields 4 servings  
adequate for 3 people

Notes: \*Dried kombu seaweed is available in most natural food stores and in food specialty stores. It should be well-rinsed and wiped dry before use. Dulse may be substituted if more readily available.

\*\*When required, this recipe can be doubled. The broth can be frozen quite successfully. It can also be canned using a water-bath canner. Process for about 15 minutes.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING (exclusive of cheese) –  
PROTEIN = 8.5 g.; FAT = 2.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 23.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 246; CALORIES FROM FAT = 10%

## RUSSIAN CARROT *RISsoles*

# *Kotlyety iz Morkovi*

TPT - 1 hour and 7 minutes;  
30 minutes = refrigeration period

*Root vegetables always filled baskets in my grandparents' root cellar in Rochester, New York, in the 1940s and '50s. Thinking back now to wooden boxes of golden parsnips, orange carrots, red beets, and orchard baskets overflowing with different kinds of potatoes and onions in shades of browns and beiges makes me realize how very much I took for granted. There were baskets of all kinds of apples through 'til about January and gray Hubbard squashes, golden butternuts, and acorn squashes in their impervious "shells" of green and gold. Carrot and parsnip tops peeked through the straw under which they remained buried in the soft soil that formed the floor. They would be harvested when needed. There too, the stores for winter were important. The carrots in the Soviet State stores in Moscow, brought in from the greenhouse storage collectives, were sad, wheezened specimens, much like the organic carrots available in healthfood co-ops here in the 1980s. During our winter visit to the Soviet Union, we noticed creative recipes designed to use the storage carrots. Carrot salads, stews and soups, and rissoles, borrowed from the French, but sans pastry, never revealed the whimpy condition of their major ingredient.*

**1/4 pound carrots—scraped or pared and chopped**  
**1 cup boiling water**

**1 1/2 teaspoons butter**  
**1 1/2 teaspoons farina or semolina, if available**  
**2 tablespoons skimmed milk**  
**1 1/2 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs (the approximate equivalent volume of 1 egg yolk)**  
**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

**1 1/2 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs**

**1/2 cup dry breadcrumbs**

**2 tablespoons butter**

**2 tablespoons low-fat dairy sour cream**  
**1 tablespoon calorie reduced or light mayonnaise**

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, cook chopped carrots in *boiling* water, covered, until soft. Drain.

Turn drained carrots back into the saucepan set over *MEDIUM-LOW* heat. Add butter and stir until it melts. Add farina, milk, 1 1/2 tablespoonfuls pasteurized eggs, and black pepper. Return to the heat and cook, stirring constantly, until farina is cooked and mixture is dry. Remove from heat.

Refrigerate for about 30 minutes so that mixture can be handled comfortably.

Put the remaining 1 1/2 tablespoonfuls pasteurized eggs in a soup plate. Put breadcrumbs into a second soup plate.

In a large non-stick-coated skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt the 2 tablespoonfuls butter.

Shape the carrot–farina mixture into four *rissoles*. Roll each in the pasteurized eggs and then in the breadcrumbs, being sure to cover the *rissoles* well.\* Fry in hot butter, turning to insure even browning. Remove to paper toweling to drain. Transfer to a warmed serving dish or platter. Keep warm on a warming tray until ready to serve.

Mix sour cream and mayonnaise together thoroughly and transfer to a small serving dish.

Serve fried *rissoles* with the sour cream–mayonnaise sauce.

Yields 4 servings  
adequate for 2 people

Notes: \*The *rissoles* can be prepared to this point early in the day and refrigerated until the last minute, when you are ready to fry.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., per *rissole* with about 2 teaspoonfuls of sauce) –  
PROTEIN = 4.3 g.; FAT = 10.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 13.8 g.;  
CALORIES = 172; CALORIES FROM FAT = 52%



*As we move forward in this adventure together  
I see more and more need by young marrieds and downsizers like ourselves.  
Next month we will begin consideration of downsizing recipes  
for the convenience, I hope, of all.  
Please stop by.*

*Judy*

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

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