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

February 2018

CONVENIENCE ITEMS

Baked Beans with Peaches and Cheese

**Cream of Tomato – Celery Soup with *Tortellini*
and Cauliflower**

Mexican Lentil and Chard Soup

Orange Marmalade – Yogurt *Mousse*

Let's face it, none of us have enough time to grow the wheat, harvest the wheat, mill the grain, grind the grain, and bake the bread nor do we have to. Our grocery store shelves are loaded with products that make cooking a lot easier for our generation than was experienced by the generations before us. Sadly, many of those products add excessive sugar, salt, and fat, much in the form of trans fats, to our diets. As a consequence we now spend time reading labels for ingredients, calories, and use-by dates. Vegetarians, vegans, and other health-conscious consumers also check for ingredients that manufacturers sneak into products that we do want in our foods. For example, that "catch-all" category of "natural flavoring and coloring" should not be as comforting as it intends to be. Animal-sourced items such as a red dye derived from crushed female cochineal insects is used to provide the deep red coloring once red dye #2 was withdrawn by the FDA in 1976 and castoreum, extracted from beaver and muskrat genitals, is used to make certain artificial vanilla flavoring products. The enzymes pepsin and rennet, used to make cheese, comes from calves and pigs stomachs. The addition of vitamins A and D3 to foods may sound like a healthful innovation but when these vitamins are obtained from fish liver oil, they are not an option for vegetarians or vegans.

The Campbell Soup Company issued a set of spiral-bound cookbooks back in the 1960s that put soup into every menu course in ways no one had ever imagined. Just as I set about to hone my sauce making skills, the art of sauce making hit a new low. Canned soups are undeniably convenient but they present a big problem—sodium. While visiting my very good friend, we decided to go soup shopping to resupply her canned goods. We inventoried the sodium content of dozens of varieties of organic soups from name-brand manufacturers and those of the house brands we found. Yes, there was an improvement from the non-organic vegetarian soups available but many still had too much sodium for either of us. I routinely add a quartered potato to canned soup when I heat it and then toss that potato chunks into the compost before serving the soup, a trick my grandmother taught me. The potato absorbs the salt and returns an oversalted stew or soup to tolerable status.

The term "convenience foods" became an overarching term of condemnation when many products did not actually deserve the damnation. Go into your natural food store and search their inventory. Their shelves and freezers would be empty and they would be out of business if all convenience items were to be avoided.

Low-sodium beans and tomatoes and fruits canned in juice rather than heavy syrup invite shoppers to explore aisles of their supermarkets that they once just bypassed. Some manufacturers even routinely use cans free of PBA. Low-fat dairy products, soy milk, and almond milk are now standard items in the dairy aisle. Soy meat analogue products are available frozen everywhere. We do not have to stuff our own spaghetti or *paste ripiens*; *tortellini*, *ravioli*, stuffed shells, etc. are available frozen, refrigerated, and, in some cases, dried. Most stores now have natural food sections or whole aisles where

both organic and gluten-free products can be found. Our good fortune is to be celebrated but we still have to check the ingredients, review the food values, and watch those use-by dates.



BAKED BEANS WITH PEACHES AND CHEESE

TPT - 1 hour and 5 minutes

Making baked beans in my brown Boston bean pot required overnight soaking of the beans to preserve the integrity of the beans, hours of simmering in a kettle until the beans were cooked, and then hours of simmering in the bean pot. Because we now have access to convenience items, this quickly-assembled classic bean pot can be in the oven in minutes. I set it up in the morning as I am drinking my tea. An hour and a half before dinner, I remove it from refrigerator and place it in a cold oven. Set at a low heat, the house soon smells wonderful. You don't expect the peaches but they taste very good indeed.

- 1 can (16 ounces) organic vegetarian baked beans in tomato sauce**
- 1/2 cup chopped onion**
- 2 tablespoons commercially-available chili sauce**
- 2 very firm peaches—peeled, stoned, and coarsely chopped***
- 1/4 cup diced (about 1 ounce) low-moisture mozzarella cheese or domestic, unaged provolone cheese, if preferred**

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Prepare a bean pot or 1-quart oven-to-table casserole by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In the bean pot or casserole, combine beans, chopped onion, and chili sauce. Stir to combine well. Then, add chopped peaches and cheese. Again, stir to combine.

Bake in preheated 300 degree F. oven for about 1 hour, or until hot and bubbling.**



Yields 5 servings
adequate for 3 people

Notes: *To maintain the integrity of the fruit, it is important that the peaches you choose be under-ripe. In mid-winter, I use peach slices canned in juice. If you prefer, this can be made with apricots, canned in light syrup.

**Leftovers can be reheated the next day and served over toast.

This recipe is easily doubled or tripled, when required.

1/5 SERVING – PROTEIN = 7.5 g.; FAT = 1.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 24.5 g.;
CALORIES = 136; CALORIES FROM FAT = 10%

CREAM OF TOMATO – CELERY SOUP WITH *TORTELLINI* AND CAULIFLOWER

TPT - 24 minutes

Sometimes the day just gets a way from us; the kitchen is filled with maps and manuscript material and we are just too tired to clear it all out and start a “from scratch” dinner. Down from the emergency shelf come the cans of soup and fruit for dessert, off the shelf comes the bag of dried tortellini, some cauliflower and salad fixings from the vegetable drawer, a little milk, a little sour cream – all the time stepping over the maps – and we are in business. Quick, easy, and if you’ve got only a square foot of counter space free, it’ll work.

**1/2 can reduced-sodium, concentrated cream
of tomato soup**

1/2 can concentrated cream of celery soup

2/3 cup skimmed milk

3 tablespoons light dairy sour cream

1 tablespoon Thai sweet *chili* sauce

1 quart boiling water

1 ounce spinach and ricotta dried tortellini

1/4 cup tiny orange cauliflower florets*

In a large saucepan set over *MEDIUM-LOW* heat, combine the concentrated cream of tomato and cream of celery soups. Using a wire whisk, gradually whisk in the milk, sour cream, and Thai sweet *chili* sauce until smooth. Allow to come to the boil, stirring frequently.

Meanwhile, in a second saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, combine boiling water and tortellini. Cook for about 8 minutes.

Add cauliflower florets. Cook for an additional 2 minutes. Drain. Add to heating soup mixture.

Turn into a heated **5-cup soup tureen**. Serve into heated soup plates.

Refrigerate leftovers and reheat in a double boiler.



Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: *Orange cauliflower florets are so beautiful in this soup but if you didn’t just happen to buy one that morning, a white cauliflower will do just fine . . . or even broccoli, if you prefer.

This recipe can be doubled for an “in-from-the-cold” lunch or supper, if necessary.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.4 g.; FAT = 3.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.9 g.;
CALORIES = 113; CALORIES FROM FAT = 26%

MEXICAN LENTIL AND CHARD SOUP

Sopa de Lenteja y Acelgas

TPT - 22 minutes

When you have a big family or you have guests coming to stay, making a big kettle of soup makes perfect sense but when there are just two of you, it just is not practical. A friend, who often makes that big kettle of soup on a long winter weekend, told me recently that that big kettle of soup is getting boring after Tuesday . . . I have halved many of my recipes as the years have passed and do try to make soups that can be frozen so that I do not have a week of those “planned leftovers.” However, you have to have the time to make soups and many of us do not have large blocks of time. Making a lentil soup from scratch is really not difficult but creating a main course Mexican-style lentil soup using a couple of convenience items can bring a tureen filled with nutrition to the table quickly. This is a delicious vegetarian entrée.

1 cup organic, vegetarian lentil soup
1 cup canned, diced tomatoes
1/2 cup vegetarian stock of choice
3 tablespoons finely chopped onion
1/4 teaspoon jalapeño sauce, or to taste

2 cups trimmed and chopped Swiss chard—well-rinsed and drained

2 tablespoons feta cheese or queso anejo, if available

In a small kettle set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine canned lentil soup, diced tomatoes, stock, *finely* chopped onion, and *jalapeño* sauce. Allow to come to the boil, stirring frequently. *Reduce heat to LOW.*

Add chopped Swiss chard. Simmer for about 8 minutes. Turn into a heated **5-cup soup tureen.**

Serve into heated soup plates. Garnish each serving with crumbled *feta* cheese. Refrigerate leftovers.

Yields about 3 1/4 cupfuls

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., about 3/4 cupful) –
PROTEIN = 5.2 g.; FAT = 3.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.7 g.;
CALORIES = 99; CALORIES FROM FAT = 28%



ORANGE MARMALADE – YOGURT *MOUSSE*

TPT - 4 hours and 12 minutes;
4 hours = yogurt draining period

That little bit of yogurt left over in the refrigerator need not be discarded because “there just isn’t enough for anything.” And . . . what to do with the open jar of orange marmalade you needed for Christmas recipes? The title of this recipe suggests that this is a dessert that might take time to prepare. Unless you are planning to stand there and watch the whey drain from the curd, you can get on with your day.



1/3 cup plain yogurt—homemade or commercially available

**1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar**

1 1/2 tablespoons orange marmalade

Set two automatic drip coffeemaker filters into a sieve over a small bowl or a yogurt filter over a measuring cup. Pour the yogurt into the filters and set in the refrigerator. Allow to drain for about 4 hours.*

Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *chilled* bowl until soft peaks form. While continuing to beat, add confectioners' sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form.

Add the drained yogurt and the orange marmalade. At LOW speed, *whisk-fold* into the whipped cream. Divide between two dessert dishes or sherbet glasses. Refrigerate until ready to serve but for not more than 2 hours or you will start to get separation.

Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: *The resulting whey that separates from the curd should not be discarded down the drain since it can adversely affect septic tanks and pipe seals. It is a nutritious by-product of cheese and yogurt making that is loaded with protein, minerals, and enzymes. I use it instead of water in my bread recipes and add it to the cooking water for rice, pasta, and potatoes. When I soak oatmeal overnight, I soak it in whey. Add it to soups, stews, and smoothies, and if you still have some left over, refrigerate or freeze it. It is inadvisable to pour whey down the drain but do pour any excess on your compost pile or feed your acid-loving crops. Chickens and pigs are said to love it.

This recipe can be doubled or tripled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.7 g.; FAT = 10.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.8 g.;
CALORIES = 177; CALORIES FROM FAT = 53%

*March is a month in which the realization of spring is close
but the weather often prevents us from getting into town to get fresh fruit.
Canned fruit takes up some of the slack but so do the dried fruits in our larder
that need to be used up before the warm weather moves in.
Next month I will share some recipes from my files
that may help you enjoy the few dried apricots, peaches, figs, cherries, etc.
that you have squirreled away for winter snacking.
Please, do stop by,*

Judy

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

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