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

January 2018

RICE AND BEANS

Lentil Sauce for Pasta

Polenta with Grilled Vegetables and White Beans

**Quesadillas with Black Beans, Caramelized Onions,
and Sour Cream**

Southwestern Black Beans, Corn, and Tomatoes

William Cumming Rose, whose 1951 publications reported his confirmation of the need of the human body for twenty amino acids in the formation of proteins, laid the groundwork for the categorizing of essential and non-essential amino acids. His published work confirmed that eight amino acids were essential to adult nutrition; a ninth, histidine, is essential to human infants. The remaining eleven amino acids can be manufactured by the body. While animal-sourced proteins are complete, plants generally have deficiencies of one or more of the so-called essential amino acids, protein building blocks that humans can not synthesize.

Back in the 1960s and '70s, after the work of researchers such as Rose, Haines, and Warner, vegetarians agonized over menus that would complement amino acids at every meal, providing complete proteins. In time it was shown that it was not necessary to balance amino acids within a single meal. Nevertheless, since Americans are accustomed to consuming too much protein, the adjustment to vegetarianism for some involves constant trepidation of not consuming enough protein, at least for a few years. If you have children, you will hear grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, strangers, and TV personalities warning you that your vegetarian children are in danger. We even had a guide in Moscow warn us It is not that difficult to get the protein you need. If you choose the ovo-lacto path, you actually have to be careful not to exceed your fair share. Adult females need about 44 grams of protein daily while adult males need about 56 grams of protein. Remember excess protein is converted into fat and seriously excessive protein intake can result in the production of ketones and uric acid placing an abnormal demand on the liver and kidneys to discharge the excessive nitrogen load.

“Rice and Beans” cultures solve the complementation of amino acids by including beans and rice at almost every meal. Beans provide isoleucine and lysine which is deficient in grains while rice provides methionine which is deficient in legumes. The eight essential amino acids can be delivered efficiently in a single meal to provide the body the necessary protein building blocks, the tools that the body needs to replace body cells lost daily. This is a consideration with most grains and beans, barley and soybeans being exceptions. By now you are probably focusing on Latin American cuisines but there are similarly satisfactory combinations from all over the world.

Soybeans take up the slack for rice in Asia.

A peanut sauce over rice noodles is “rice and beans” to the Thai.

Millet and chick peas in North Africa accomplish the same end result.

Somali make an unusual *couscous* salad with a tomato and black bean *vinaigrette*.

West Africans make a delicious *pasta* salad with a peanut butter dressing.

Egyptians dip their breakfast bread in the legume-rich spice mixture *dukka*.

Venetians combine rice with green peas for the classic *risi e bisi*.

In the Italian South and in Greece you will find lentils and *orzo*.

Hummus and fresh baked *pitas* are popular in the Middle East.

Pita stuffed with *falafel* can be found in Israel and in Lebanon and in Jordan.

There is a delicious rice and lima bean stew prepared in Cape Verde.

If you are hungry in Great Britain, beans on toast will provide that amino acid complementation.

Lima bean and corn succotash qualifies.

New Orleans red beans and rice, the classic American peanut butter sandwich,
a granola bar with peanuts . . . oh, the list could get very, very long . . .

I have been amazed how instinctive this seems to be. People who have no clue what the term complemented proteins means somehow “know” that certain foods belong together nutritionally. My grandmother and I were making a stew together. Before she put the meat in, I said, “But, I don’t eat meat. I would make this with beans.” She responded without a hesitation, “Oh, that’s fine. You’ll be serving bread with it, won’t you?”

LENTIL SAUCE FOR PASTA *Salsa di Lenticchie*

TPT - 1 hour and 45 minutes



Cooked with vegetables and served over pasta, lentils, one of the oldest cultivated foods on planet Earth, become a one-dish meal to please and nourish. Greeks prepare “Fakomatso” which also pairs the legume proteins of lentils with the grain proteins of macaroni. It is a much simpler dish and perhaps, who knows for sure, a direct ancestor of this Italian lentil sauce since Greece occupied Sicily up until 241 B.C. when Sicily became a colony of Rome as a result of the Punic Wars.

Even though I am usually cooking for two or three, I make this recipe as it is presented here and freeze half of it for another meal.

1/3 cup dry lentils

1 1/2 cups vegetarian stock of choice

1 bay leaf—broken*

1 1/2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil

1 small onion—finely chopped

1 garlic clove—finely chopped

**1/2 cup finely chopped white (*Agaricus*) mushrooms
—chopped from mushrooms that have been
trimmed, rinsed, and cleaned well with a brush**

1 small carrot—finely chopped

2 tablespoons finely chopped celery

2 tablespoons finely chopped green pepper

**1/2 cup canned, diced tomatoes—well-drained or
1 medium tomato—peeled, seeded, and chopped**

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano—crushed

Pinch crushed, dried thyme

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**1 cup plum tomato purée, preferably homemade
and unsalted**

1/4 cup water or vegetarian stock, if preferred

**Freshly grated Parmesan or pecorino Romano
cheese or feta cheese, if preferred**

Sort lentils and discard any of poor quality.

In a non-aluminum saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine washed lentils, 1 1/2 cupfuls stock, and bay leaf.* Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to *LOW*, cover tightly, and simmer for about 30 minutes, or until lentils are tender. Drain, reserving the liquid for soup stock. Remove and discard bay leaf pieces.

In a skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine oil, *finely* chopped onion, garlic, mushrooms, carrot, celery, and green pepper. Sauté until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful not to allow any of the vegetables to brown*.

In a non-aluminum saucepan with cover set over *LOW* heat, combine drained lentils, sautéed vegetables, chopped tomatoes, black pepper, and crushed oregano and thyme. Cover tightly and cook over *LOW* heat until vegetables are soft—about 15 minutes. Stir frequently.

Stir in tomato purée. Add 1/4 cupful water or stock and cook, stirring frequently, over *LOW* heat until heated through and of desired thickness—about 30 minutes.**

Serve over cooked high protein or whole wheat spaghetti or macaroni, of choice. Pass freshly grated cheese.

Yields about 3 cupfuls
adequate to dress about
1 pound of cooked spaghetti

Notes: *The bay leaf pieces are most easily recovered if secured inside a tea ball during the simmering process.

**The flavor of this sauce greatly improves if prepared the day before it is required.

If desired, a smooth purée may be prepared using an electric blender or food processor. This gives a very differently textured sauce.

Since this recipe is easily doubled, when required, and since it freezes well, this is a smart menu planning idea.

1/6 SERVING (per 1/2 cupful) –
PROTEIN = 4.2 g.; FAT = 1.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 13.6 g.;
CALORIES = 78; CALORIES FROM FAT = 13%

POLENTA WITH GRILLED VEGETABLES AND WHITE BEANS *Polenta con Grigliata di Verdura e Fagioli*

TPT - 26 minutes

Visits to Italy and Scotland implanted fond memories of the casual way that a formal meal can find its way to the garden. A rug or tablecloth suddenly appears on the table as the chairs are carried from the house, the dishes and food appear on the table, and everyone just takes their time enjoying food, wine, and conversation. Even if these vegetables are pan-grilled in the kitchen and delivered to a backyard table or even to the dining room table, a plate loaded with this tasty mixture is as well-received as if you all stood around the grill waiting. I do think the easiest way to control the grilling of vegetables is to grill them on a grill pan on the stove—no flare-ups, no catastrophes as the vegetables slip through the grill into the flames below, no bugs . . .



3 small Campari cocktail tomatoes—sliced
1 mini eggplant—sliced
2 slices peeled yellow summer squash—sliced in half
2 baby red, yellow, or orange bell pepper—cored,
seeded, and halved
4 *thick-cut* slices French bread

1 tablespoon *extra virgin* olive oil
2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon preserved capers—well-drained
1 small garlic clove—*very finely* chopped
1/4 teaspoon *finely* chopped fresh oregano
Pinch salt

1/2 cup canned white beans—rinsed and well-drained

4 slices commercially-available *polenta**

4 lemon wedges

Preheat grill pan over *MEDIUM* heat.

Grill tomato, eggplant, and yellow squash slices, peppers, and French bread slices. When hot and marked, set bread aside and chop vegetables. Turn vegetables into a skillet over *LOW* heat. *Do not turn off heat under grill pan.*

Add oil, vinegar, well-drained capers, *very finely* chopped garlic, salt, and *finely* chopped oregano. Toss.

Add beans.

Meanwhile, grill *polenta* slices, marking both sides. Place on heated platter.

Raise heat under vegetables to *MEDIUM*. Stir until heated through. Spoon vegetables over the *polenta*.

Serve at once. Top each serving with a grilled slice of bread and a wedge of lemon.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: *Organic *polenta*, packaged in a plastic tube, is shelf-stable so you may not always find it in the refrigerated compartment of your produce department or natural food store but instead on a grocery shelf. It will keep well in your refrigerator until required but should be used up quickly after the package has been opened.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 7.5 g.; FAT = 3.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 32.0 g.;
CALORIES = 276; CALORIES FROM FAT = 12%

QUESADILLAS WITH BLACK BEANS, CARMELIZED ONIONS, AND SOUR CREAM

Quesadillas con Frijoles Negros, Cebollas, y Crema Agria

TPT - 38 minutes

My mom always loved onion sandwiches; I could barely deal with an onion on a burger until sweet Vidalia and Walla Walla onions came along. However, I do love onion jam and just thought that this quesadilla might make a very good appetizer or even a light supper. This recipe makes one large quesadilla, sufficient for two people. Just double or triple, as needed.

Non-stick lecithin *high heat* spray coating

**2 cups *thinly* sliced Italian red onion—about 1 pound—
separated into rings**

Non-stick lecithin high-heat spray coating

1/2 teaspoon sugar

**Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, black, and white—
to taste**

2 eight-inch flour *tortillas*—whole wheat, if available

2 tablespoons *light* dairy sour cream

2 tablespoons canned black beans—well-rinsed and well-drained

2 tablespoons *enchilada* sauce *or salsa*, of choice

Shredded lettuce, for garnish

Preheat a grill pan or skillet over *MEDIUM* heat. Coat lightly with the *high heat* cooking spray.

Add onion rings. Spray the onion rings with the *high heat* cooking spray. Toss and spray again.

Cook, stirring and turning frequently with a wooden fork, until onions have softened.

Sprinkle sugar over. Toss. Grind pepper over. Toss. Continue cooking and stirring until most of the juice has evaporated and onions are soft. Transfer to plate or bowl and place on a warming tray until required.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Prepare a baking sheet by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Place one *tortilla* on prepared baking sheet. Spread with 2 tablespoonfuls of sour cream leaving a 3/4-inch border. Scatter black beans over each.* Scatter the caramelized onions over the *tortilla* surface. Spoon *enchilada* sauce, concentrating it in the central area of each. Place the remaining *tortilla* on top of the prepared *tortilla*, pressing down firmly.

Bake in 400 degree F. oven for about 7 minutes, or until *tortillas* begin to brown. Remove from oven and transfer to a cutting board. Using a large, sharp knife or a pizza cutter, cut the *quesadilla* into quarters. Arrange on a heated platter or serve directly from the cutting board, if preferred.

Garnish with shredded lettuce before serving.



Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people as an entrée;
adequate for 4 people as an appetizer

Notes: *If neither corn nor rice will be served at this meal, a little extra grain can be included by adding 2 tablespoons of corn kernels at this point.

This recipe is easily increased proportionately, when required.

1/4 SERVING (per quarter) –
PROTEIN = 3.0 g.; FAT = 1.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 16.8 g.;
CALORIES = 105; CALORIES FROM FAT = 15%

SOUTHWESTERN BLACK BEANS, CORN, AND TOMATOES

TPT - 13 minutes

Here, black beans and corn fulfill the “beans and rice” criteria for protein complementation. I often add garlic, if is not already in a dish for the same menu, and if I have an avocado ready for the table, it makes a perfect garnish whether chopped or sliced.

1 teaspoon butter
1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

1/2 cup canned black beans—well-drained
1/2 cup green (fresh) or frozen corn kernels
1/2 cup canned, diced tomatoes—well-drained
1/2 teaspoon Thai sweet chili sauce
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh coriander (cilantro)
1/4 teaspoon crushed, dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon crushed, dried mint
Pinch ground cumin
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste



In a saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat butter and oil.

Add corn, black beans, diced tomatoes, Thai sweet *chili* sauce, *finely* chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*), crushed, dried oregano and mint, ground cumin, and pepper. Stir to combine. Cook, stirring frequently, until heated through. Turn into a heated serving bowl.

Keep warm on a warming tray if not served immediately.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Note: This recipe can be doubled.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.5 g.; FAT = 2.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 15.1 g.;
CALORIES = 86; CALORIES FROM FAT = 25%

*Technology and demand have given us convenience items that
make our time schedules so much more productive than when I was a child
but, of course, some are good and some are not so good.*

*People often think being a vegetarian takes too much time . . .
Believe me, we find time for other things in our lives.
Next month's column will feature recipes that take advantage of convenience.*

*Do stop by as we explore recipes that
disprove the general opinion that “convenience food” is shameful.*

Judy

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

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