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

October 2018

ON TO THANKSGIVING, Part 2:

Cranberry Vinegar with Pineapple Sage

**Holiday Tossed Greens, Fruits, and Nuts
with Cheeses and Cranberry Vinaigrette**

Spiced Whole Berry Cranberry – Apricot Relish

Baked Jack-Be-Littles

Mexican Pumpkin Flan

Pumpkin – Pecan Squares

Pumpkin – Sage Cream Sauce

Cranberries and pumpkins have become almost required ingredients in American and Canadian Thanksgiving menus. We accept this, I suspect, with little knowledge of how deeply important these traditional foods were to the early settlers.

First Nation peoples were very familiar with the small berries of the dwarf evergreen shrub that grew in the acidic bogs and ponds of New England. They called them *Sassamanash* and used them for medicinal purposes, for food, and to make dyes. The name cranberry seems to be a distortion of the name craneberry, a name said to have been given to the berries because they were a favorite food of cranes who stopped on their autumn migration south. I once read that a colonial diarist noted that he had better get out there and harvest before the cranes descended. It is also posited that the flower structure resembled a crane's head. In addition, they were called "bearberries" because bears were so fond of them.

We find them in our markets for a short period of time beginning in October. Canned jellied and whole berry cranberry sauce are now available for most of the year as are dehydrated cranberries. Since fresh cranberries need no preparation for freezing, a couple of bags in the freezer for summer meals is an easy way to insure the availability of the powerful antioxidants they contain.

The pumpkin is another squash / gourd of the "Three Sisters" tradition associated with the Native Americans of the northeastern United States. The fruit is native to North America, although, once introduced to other continents, has spread around the globe with the exception of Antarctica. The oldest evidence of the pumpkin, or its less round and less orange ancestor, comes from seeds found in Mexico which date cultivation to between 7,000 and 5,500 BC. Again, as I illustrated over and over in my book *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*, foods of the western hemisphere have traveled and influenced cuisines all over the globe.

The pumpkin pie we and our Canadian neighbors treasure for our harvest Thanksgivings is an entirely appropriate tradition for this native winter squash. It is recorded that pumpkin was served at Plimoth Plantation's second Thanksgiving gathering but not as the pumpkin pie we know today. A wonderful recipe from that period reveals a method of preparation you will never find in a modern cookbook. The top was removed as we would for a jack-o-lantern. The seeds and fibrous material were removed. Cream, eggs, honey, and spices were beaten together and poured into the pumpkin. The top was replaced and the pumpkin was buried in the ashes of the fire, over which meats were roasting, until the custard was set and the flesh of the pumpkin was soft. Plates and spoons at the ready, pumpkin and custard were scooped out.

Carving this native winter squash is also a North American tradition undoubtedly descended from a British and Irish practice of carving vegetables to make lanterns and the famous Irish myth about a man known as “Stinky Jack” . . . hence, the name jack-o-lantern.

You will note that canned pumpkin purée is specified in the recipes which follow. This is because it is a thicker, more flavorful purée since it not just cooked, puréed, and strained fresh pumpkin. It is instead a purée most often made from Golden Nugget, Acorn, and/or Butternut squashes.



CRANBERRY VINEGAR WITH PINEAPPLE SAGE

TPT - 3 weeks and 14 minutes;
3 weeks = flavor development period

The leaves of pineapple or tangerine sage are so divinely fragrant that I look for ways to enjoy them as I wait for and hope for the luscious red flowers that may or may not come depending on drought or frost. This vinegar hints at the holiday season approaching but reminds me all through the winter of next year’s pineapple sage and the game we will again play together. Will a dish of vanilla ice cream covered with pineapple sage blossoms elegantly grace my September table next year or not?



1 cup fresh cranberries—very well-washed, and well-dried
About 10 large, fresh, unsprayed pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*) leaves—very well-washed, and well-dried
1 thin slice fresh gingerroot
1 small garlic clove—peeled
1 or 2 chive flowers, if available
3 1/2 cups rice wine vinegar

Sterilize a 1-quart bottle or jar.

Combine well-washed and well-dried cranberries and pineapple sage leaves, gingerroot, and garlic clove in the sterilized 1-quart bottle or jar. Pour rice wine vinegar over, being sure to cover completely. Cap.

Allow to stand at room temperature in a dark cupboard for 3 weeks to allow for both flavor and color development.

Sterilize a clear, condiment bottle.

Strain vinegar into sterilized condiment bottle.

Store vinegar at cool room temperature away from light for up to a year.

Yields 3 1/2 cupfuls

Note: This recipe may be doubled or tripled or quadrupled with ease; helpful if you should want to give bottles as gifts.

1/56 SERVING (i. e., per tablespoonful) –
PROTEIN = 0.0 g.; FAT = 0.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 0.0 g.;
CALORIES = 0.0; CALORIES FROM FAT = 0%



HOLIDAY TOSSED GREENS, FRUITS, AND NUTS WITH CHEESES AND CRANBERRY *VINAIGRETTE*

TPT - 30 minutes;
8 hours = cranberry reconstitution period;
1 hour = cranberry sugaring period

*The flavors of this salad are excitingly complex and each forkful will be different and interesting.
The salad itself seems like a celebration.*

1 can (11 ounces) mandarin orange sections

1/4 cup dried cranberries*

1 tablespoon sugar

2 tablespoons broken walnut pieces

2 tablespoons pecan halves

2 tablespoons hazelnut pieces

**1 1/2 tablespoons CRANBERRY VINEGAR WITH
PINEAPPLE SAGE [see recipe in this column]**

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

**3 cups mixed spring salad greens or mesclun
—well-rinsed and well-dried**

**1 small red-skinned apple—well-rinsed, cored and
chopped**

1 kiwifruit—peeled and sliced into rounds

1/4 cup Italian red onion rings

**3 tablespoons commercially-available shredded
mixed Italian cheeses**

Drain mandarin orange sections, *reserving the canning liquid.*

Pour the canning liquid into a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat. Add dried cranberries and allow to come to the boil. *Remove from heat* and set aside for 30 minutes to allow the cranberries to absorb the sweet liquid.

Put sugar into a soup plate. Roll cranberries in the sugar and place on a piece of waxed paper. Allow to dry for at least 1 hour.

Meanwhile, in a 250 degree F. oven, *lightly* toast nut pieces.

Prepare *vinaigrette* by combining vinegar with olive oil in a cruet. Shake vigorously.

In a large salad bowl, combine salad greens, chopped apple, mandarin orange sections, and sugared cranberries. Toss to mix well. Add toasted nuts. Again, toss to mix well.

Arrange kiwifruit slices decoratively in the center. Arrange red onion rings decoratively on top of the kiwifruit slices. Sprinkle cheese over.

Serve at once, with prepared cranberry *vinaigrette*.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 3 people

Notes: *Drying your own cranberries, using one of the expensive dehydrators available, is a very simple process. By drying cranberries yourself you can be assured of their quality.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 8.1 g.; FAT = 11.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.8 g.;
CALORIES = 181; CALORIES FROM FAT = 57%

SPICED WHOLE BERRY CRANBERRY – APRICOT RELISH

TPT - 8 hours and 35 minutes;
8 hours = flavor development period

Tart cranberries can take on the sweetness of apricots, raisins, warm spices, and orange juice, and still never let you forget that, yes, this is a cranberry sauce. This is an outstanding sauce or relish and is a worthy addition to any Thanksgiving or Christmas menu.

6 ounces fresh or frozen cranberries
1/2 cup preservative-free, dark raisins
1 cup boiling water
6 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
1/2 cup sugar
1 two-inch piece stick cinnamon
3 whole cloves
3 whole allspice berries

**1 cup canned apricot halves packed in juice (about
3 apricots)—pitted, if necessary, well-drained,
and chopped***

Wash cranberries thoroughly and discard any of poor quality. Drain well.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-LOW* heat, combine cranberries and raisins with *boiling* water and orange juice. Add sugar, cinnamon stick, whole cloves, and whole allspice berries. Combine well. Cook, uncovered, until cranberries pop—about 20 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Turn into a mixing bowl. Add chopped apricots. Stir *gently* to combine well. Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours, or overnight, to allow sauce to thicken and flavors to develop, stir occasionally.

Fish through the sauce to remove cinnamon stick, cloves, and allspice berries. Discard. Turn into serving dish.** and refrigerate until required.***

Yields about 3 cupfuls



Notes: *Rehydrated, dried, *sulfite-free* apricots may be substituted, if preferred. We have also used canned peaches in this sauce and no one complained.

**This sauce molds well. Use a small dish or 3-cup mold.

***Since the complex flavors of this sauce actually improve when refrigerated it not only is convenient to make the sauce several days to a week ahead, it is a good idea because the flavors will then develop fully. Leftover sauce, therefore, really tastes better than it did on the first day.

This recipe may be doubled, when required.

1/12 SERVING (i. e., 1/4 cupful) –
PROTEIN = 0.2 g.; FAT = 0.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.3 g.;
CALORIES = 81; CALORIES FROM FAT = 2%

BAKED JACK-BE-LITTLES

TPT- 52 minutes

Every October baskets of the tiny gourds known as Jack-Be-Littles appear in large farm basket in our markets. Although referred to by most as pumpkins, they are, instead, more closely related to acorn squash. This is easy to surmise if you examine the stems which are smooth and flared at the attachment site like an acorn squash and not prickly and angular as are stems of a pumpkin. Everybody uses these precious little squashes to decorate for Halloween and Thanksgiving. We decorate briefly but gradually, two by two, they disappear from the fruit bowl. In addition to this simple way to enjoy Jack-Be-Littles, I sometimes bake them, add only butter, and then fill them a wild rice pilaf or a lentil mixture and serve them as an entrée instead of as a side.



2 Jack-Be Littles

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare small roasting pan by filling it half way with water.

Cut the tops from each squash as you would for a pumpkin which you are about to carve. Scoop out the seeds and, using a spoon, scrape fibrous material from the walls and from the top.

Put a tablespoonful of butter and 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls of brown sugar into the cavity of each little squash. Replace lids. Place in baking pan. Bake in preheated 350 degree F. oven for about 40 minutes, or until tender.

Serve at once with spoons.



Yields 2 individual servings

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.1 g.; FAT = 11.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 16.8 g.;
CALORIES = 170; CALORIES FROM FAT = 62%

MEXICAN PUMPKIN *FLAN*

Flan de Calabaza

TPT - 1 hour and 43 minutes;
20 minutes = room temperature cooling period;
8 hours = refrigeration period

In 1856 sweetened condensed milk was first made available to the American homemaker. The very rich preserved milk product was the result of experimentation centuries before to create a safe, stable milk product that would “keep.” The sugar and the lactose in the condensed milk kill the bacteria by drawing moisture from them. It was available in Latin America and India long before it was available here, which accounts for recipes from both areas that seem deceptively modern to American cooks. It proved to be useful to the commissaries of both the North and the South during the American Civil War. When the fat-free version became available, I felt that I had been granted permission to experiment freely and to pull recipes from files that I had once considered excessive expenditures of fat calories. Here, pumpkin purée makes the Spanish-influenced flan Mexico’s own since pumpkins have been grown in the western hemisphere for over 5,000 years having been introduced to Europe only after being described by Jacques Cartier during his exploration of the St. Lawrence region.

This is a favorite dessert idea to use up sweetened condensed milk that is sitting in the refrigerator and leftover canned pumpkin that has been stashed in the freezer. We plan this for two meals and a tea snack.

1/4 cup sugar

1/2 can (7 ounces) fat-free sweetened condensed milk

1/2 cup canned pumpkin—unseasoned and unsweetened *

1/4 cup whole milk

1/2 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 2 eggs)

1 1/2 teaspoons brandy**

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/8 teaspoon ground ginger

1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare an **8-inch quiche dish** with lecithin spray coating for baking. Cover the bottom of the *quiche* dish with a circle of parchment paper. Coat the top surface of the parchment paper with the same lecithin spray coating for baking.

Sprinkle the 1/2 cupful sugar across the bottom of the *quiche* dish. Place *quiche* dish in preheated oven and, *while watching carefully*, allow sugar to melt and caramelize. The melted sugar should turn a light brown color. *Be vigilant; the sugar can burn very quickly.* Remove cake pan from oven and set on top of stove until required.

Reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees F.

Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk, pumpkin purée, milk, pasteurized eggs, brandy flavoring, ground cinnamon and ginger, and grated nutmeg. Using a wire whisk, combine thoroughly. Pour pumpkin-custard mixture over caramelized sugar.

Spoon off any foam which remains. Set in a baking pan in which a 1/2-3/4-inch water bath has been prepared. Bake in preheated 325 degree F. oven for about 50 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Check water level occasionally and add *cold* water, if needed. *Do not allow water bath to simmer or boil—add cold water or ice cubes*, if necessary.

Remove from water bath to a wire rack. Allow to cool for about 20 minutes. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill for 8 hours before serving.

Loosen edges of *flan* by running a knife carefully around the *quiche* dish. Place a cake serving plate upside down on top of *quiche* dish and invert *flan* onto the serving plate. Remove parchment paper circle. Return to the refrigerator until ready to serve.



Serve well-chilled. Return any leftovers to the refrigerator.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Notes: *Canned pumpkin is specified because it is a thicker, more flavorful purée. Cooked, puréed, and strained fresh pumpkin may be used but we recommend that you mix it half and half with cooked, puréed, and strained fresh Golden Nugget or Acorn squash.

**If you prefer the flavor of rum, it can be substituted.

This recipe can be doubled successfully using a 10-inch *quiche* dish.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.0 g.; FAT = 0.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 32.8 g.;
CALORIES = 156; CALORIES FROM FAT = 2%

PUMPKIN – SAGE CREAM SAUCE

TPT - 22 minutes

In the fall, we like to serve this over cheese ravioli, accompanying it with a large grilled portobello mushroom or grilled red onion slices and a pear or apple salad. It is a beautiful presentation and, oh, so very celebratory of the autumn.

6 tablespoons light cream or half and half*
1/4 cup canned pumpkin—unseasoned and unsweetened**
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
3/4 tablespoon slivered fresh sage leaves—about 8 large leaves, well-washed
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 1/2 teaspoons butter

In a saucepan set over *LOW* heat, combine cream, pumpkin purée, grated Parmesan cheese, sage slivers, and black pepper. Allow to come to simmer. Simmer, stirring frequently for about 15 minutes, or until slightly thickened. *Do not allow sauce to boil*, or it will curdle.

When ready to serve, stir butter into hot sauce.

Serve at once.

Yields 3/4 cupful

Notes: *Although the resultant sauce is not as rich and elegant, on occasion we have substituted whole milk for the cream.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., about 3 tablespoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 2.4 g.; FAT = 4.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.4 g.;
CALORIES = 62; CALORIES FROM FAT = 68%





Happy Halloween.

*Next month, armed with all the ideas of the past two months,
we'll move on to the big American holiday, Thanksgiving.*

Come celebrate,

Judy

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

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