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

**December 2020**

**THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE AGAIN:**

**Chocolate – Peanut Butter Mousse**

**Cranberry Puffed Pastries with Goat Cheese**

**Creamy Chanterelles and Soy meat**

**Italian Baked Fennel with Parmesan Cheese**

**Pear, Cucumber, and Arugula Salad  
with Honey–Citrus Vinaigrette**

**Sicilian Cannoli Cream Filling in Cookie Crumb Tarts**

**Spiralized Butternut Squash with Sage and Pistachios**



No spectacular main course dishes this year, just some of those little holiday touches that might make your favorites more festive.

I remember being asked often what we, as vegetarians, were able to eat at family Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners. I thought it a silly question because the “groaning board” was always varied and extensive; it never was a problem. The turkey, roast of beef, or ham is, in actual fact, only one option. We always replied, “Think about it. How much of that turkey, roast, or ham would you actually eat?” How about, “Oh, have some turkey; after all it is Thanksgiving,” like your GI system is going to give you a pass because it is the last Thursday in November . . . Have some scalloped potatoes; some mashed winter squash; some of those wonderful petite whole green beans with sautéed almonds; a few grilled Brussels sprouts or asparagus; sample the salads; and a serving or two of cranberry sauce. Help yourself to the contents of the bread basket. Sit down with everybody and enjoy your meal. Have dessert or sample several and toast the holiday. Nobody will probably even notice that you did not partake of the “animal sacrifice” as we have come to call the carnivorous offering. As the meat platter makes the rounds, simply say, “My plate seems pretty full right now.”

Sarcasm notwithstanding, a focus on the side dishes gives much more opportunity for enjoyment. “My family always served this; your family always served that.” Sound familiar? Additionally, I find that many dishes can be made well in advance of the holiday meal, saving time and effort when so much is going on. Pre-prep and advanced-prep are doubly important in my busy days.

## CHOCOLATE – PEANUT BUTTER MOUSSE

TPT - 12 minutes

*Before all the regulations limiting what can be carried onto an airplane, we always packed a jar or two of peanut butter, nuts, dried fruits, soy nuts, and dried, spiced chick peas in our luggage. When we arrived at our destination, we tried to locate a grocery store where we could stock up on emergency provisions that would help to complement our proteins. This precaution came in handy on so many occasions, two of which I remember very clearly. A Christmas Eve in Moscow found a small group of Americans sitting in our room spreading our peanut butter on crackers that someone else had brought and munching chick peas, dried apricots, nuts, and chocolate. Everyone contributed their stash and, primed with Armenian brandy, performed for the Soviet listening devices. While traveling in Ireland with our daughter and my mother, we arrived at our B and B tired, wanting only a bath and sleep, and not really in the mood to try to locate a pub that might be willing to prepare a vegetarian meal. We spread out our snack food and divided a can of vegetarian baked beans and a can of rice pudding among us. I think my mother must have thought that she had fallen in with gypsies.*



- 2 tablespoons fat-free sweetened condensed milk**
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground, unsalted, additive-free, smooth, peanut butter—brought to room temperature**
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened dark cocoa powder**

**1/2 cup heavy whipping cream**

In a small bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk, peanut butter, and cocoa powder. Stir well until smooth.

Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *clean, chilled* bowl until stiff peaks form.

Add sweetened condensed milk mixture and *whisk-fold gently*, but *thoroughly*.

Divide between **two 4-ounce ramekins, custard cups, or wine glasses**. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Yields 2 individual servings

Note: This recipe may be doubled, when required.



1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.9 g.; FAT = 22.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 16.4 g.;  
CALORIES = 280; CALORIES FROM FAT = 72%

## CRANBERRY PUFFED PASTRIES WITH GOAT CHEESE

TPT - 47 minutes;  
15 minutes = pastry rising period

*Southern holiday meals never fail to include biscuits. Cranberry sauces, cranberry breads, and cranberry desserts appear on Northeastern tables from Thanksgiving through New Years. Combining these traditions using the vehicle of puffed pastry delivers flavor with a bit of holiday panache. Jarred, sweetened lingonberries can be substituted for the cranberries if more suitable to your menu.*

**1/2 sheet frozen puff pastry—defrosted but still cold**

**1 ounce soft goat cheese with honey—brought to room temperature**

**1/4 cup whole cranberry sauce—well-drained**

**2 teaspoons currant jelly**

**1 tablespoon fat-free pasteurized eggs**

**1 teaspoon water**



Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Prepare a baking sheet by lining with culinary parchment paper.

On a cool surface, roll puff pastry sheet into an 8 x 8-inch square. Cut pastry into four 4 x 4-inch squares.

Spread each square with a portion of the softened goat cheese. Spoon 1 tablespoonful of well-drained cranberry sauce onto one end of each square. Spoon 1/2 teaspoonful currant jelly on top of each dollop of cranberry sauce. Turn two sides toward center. Roll from the end with the filling, enclosing tightly. Seal edge with water. Place on parchment-lined baking sheet. Allow to rise for about 15 minutes.

Mix pasteurized eggs with the 1 teaspoonful water. Brush each pastry with the egg wash. Bake in preheated 400-degree F. oven for 15 minutes, or until puffed and lightly browned.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 4 pastries

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., per tablespoonful) –  
PROTEIN = 3.9 g.; FAT = 10.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 18.1 g.;  
CALORIES = 181; CALORIES FROM FAT = 51%

## CREAMY CHANTERELLES AND SOYMEAT

TPT - 8 hours and 28 minutes  
8 hours = mushroom soaking period

*As a child I knew chanterelles as “pfifferling,” the German name my great-grandfather taught me. The often peppery taste of the fresh fungi, I suspect, is the reason. Fresh chanterelles are a treasured taste—sometimes spicy and sometimes fruity—but finding an affordable source of good quality is even difficult in Pennsylvania where about sixty percent of the mushrooms sold in the United States are grown. Most groceries around us do not stock chanterelles because, I suspect, they do not want to have to deal with the economic loss from spoiled produce. I have found several mail order sources for dried chanterelles; I have even found one firm that sells certified organic mushrooms. This dish is patterned after a classic, rich chicken dish that appeared on the menus of posh French restaurants during the 1970s and ‘80s, always, I might add, served with white rice or even mashed potatoes. I usually serve it with steamed wild rice. Since it does not consume much preparation time, I find this to be an option during the holiday when the pressure is on. A garnish of blood orange slices really compliments, if you can find them.*



**3/4 cup dried *chanterelle* mushrooms—well-rinsed  
Boiling water**

**1 1/2 tablespoons butter**

**1 small carrot—pared and sliced into 2-inch  
pieces**

**4 ounces soy meat analogue strips—cut into long,  
bite-sized pieces**

**1/4 cup white wine**

**1/4 cup of reserved mushroom soaking liquid**

**Pinch of dried, crushed thyme, or to taste**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

**1/2 cup light cream *or* half and half**

**1 tablespoon *finely* chopped fresh parsley, to garnish**

**Peeled blood orange slices, to garnish, if available**



Place dried *chanterelle* mushrooms into a small bowl or measuring cup. Cover with *boiling* water and allow to reconstitute for about 8 hours, or overnight. Use a Pyrex custard dish to hold mushrooms under water during the soaking period. Drain, *reserving liquid*. Turn mushrooms into a skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat.

Add butter.

Slice carrot pieces in halves lengthwise. Cut each half into two or three lengthwise slices. Add to mushrooms.

Add soy meat. Sauté until soy meat is lightly browned.

Add wine, mushroom stock, and thyme. Cook, stirring, for several minutes. *Reduce heat to LOW.*

Add cream. Cook, stirring until heated through and cream has cooked down and thickened slightly. Turn into a serving bowl.

Garnish with *finely* chopped fresh parsley and blood orange slices.

*Serve at once.*



Yields 4 servings  
adequate for 2 people

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 12.6 g.; FAT = 8.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 6.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 151; CALORIES FROM FAT = 53%

## ITALIAN BAKED FENNEL WITH PARMESAN CHEESE

*Finocchi alla Parmigiana*

TPT - 44 minutes

*Fennel, always a favorite in our family, is positively elegant when baked in individual au gratin dishes and served as a first course or side dish. This preparation, which I discovered while visiting the northern Italian city of Florence, won out as Ray's favorite fennel dish for the holidays, as long as there is a bulb or two in the refrigerator for snacks.*



**1 medium bulb fennel—outer leaves removed, stalks and feathery leaves removed, tips and bottoms trimmed, and halved**  
**2 quarts boiling water**

**1/3 cup potato starch (potato flour)\***

**1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil**  
**1 tablespoon butter**

**Freshly ground white pepper, to taste**  
**1 1/2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese**

Prepare **two 6 x 4-inch au gratin dishes** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Cook fennel halves in *boiling* water for about 8-10 minutes. Drain fennel and pat dry with paper toweling. Cut each half into two wedges, *being careful to include a part of the core in each wedge.*

In a plastic bag, combine fennel wedges and potato flour. Shake *gently* to coat evenly. Remove dredged fennel wedges from flour, shaking off excess.

In a non-stick-coated skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil and butter. Add flour-coated fennel wedges. Cook until *crisp and browned*, turning several times to insure even browning.\*\*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Put two fennel wedges into each *au gratin* dish. Season with *white* pepper and sprinkle grated cheese evenly over the fennel wedges.

Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for about 15 minutes.

Keep warm on a warming tray until ready to serve. *Serve hot.*

Yields 2 servings

Notes: \*Potato starch (potato flour), available in most grocery stores in the baking section or in the kosher foods section, gives a pleasant hint of potato flavor to this dish. If not available, unbleached white flour may be substituted.

\*\*This recipe can be prepared to this point early in the day, becoming a real time saver during the holidays.

When required, this recipe is easily doubled.

1/4 SERVING (i. e. per wedge) –  
PROTEIN = 6.2 g.; FAT = 6.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.4 g.;  
CALORIES = 116; CALORIES FROM FAT = 48%

## PEAR, CUCUMBER, AND ARUGULA SALAD WITH HONEY-CITRUS VINAIGRETTE

TPT - 11 minutes



*Pears appear in the produce section of my market in early October and I can not resist. They are firm and in a day or two they are on the menu in this salad or spiralized for another favorite or two. Don't wait until they soften because you want the crispness that only a freshly-picked pear can give. Paired with a firm cucumber, you get an autumn salad pleasure that you will not soon forget. This is a very beautiful and unusual salad to serve for a formal dinner; it always gets attention.*



### HONEY-CITRUS VINAIGRETTE:

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice  
1/4 teaspoon grated *organic* orange zest  
1 1/2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice  
1/8 teaspoon grated *organic* lemon zest  
1 teaspoon honey *or* agave nectar  
Salt, to taste  
White pepper, to taste

1 *green* Anjou pear—halved and cored  
1 *red-skinned* Anjou pear—halved and cored  
2 baby cucumbers—peeled

1 cup baby *arugula* leaves—trimmed, well-rinsed  
and well-dried

In a cruet, combine orange juice, orange zest, lemon juice, lemon zest, honey, salt, and *white* pepper. Shake vigorously.

When ready to serve, cut the pears and cucumbers into matchstick pieces. Turn into a shallow serving bowl.

Add *arugula* leaves. Toss.

*Serve at once* with prepared honey-citrus *vinaigrette*.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 0.9 g.; FAT = 0.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 10.7 g.;  
CALORIES = 44; CALORIES FROM FAT = <1%

## SICILIAN CANNOLI CREAM FILLING IN COOKIE CRUMB TARTS

TPT - 49 hours;  
48 hours = *ricotta* draining period

*I have said, and will always think, that almost nothing compares to the creamy filling in a well-made cannoli pastry. It is the pride of Sicily and of every Sicilian cook. Sometimes I just don't feel like making cannoli shells but do have a desire for that thick, luscious cream that is piped into those shells. When that happens I make the filling and bake sugar cookie crumb tarts. This recipe is nice choice for a holiday meal since the cookie-crumbs bases and the filling can be made in advance. We often enjoy a big salad of mixed greens in front of the fire with this for dessert.*

#### TART CRUST:

2/3 cup dry sugar cookie crumbs\*

4 teaspoons soft butter spread

1 cup *part-skimmed milk ricotta* cheese

6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 tablespoons *finely chopped, preservative-free*  
citron *or* candied orange and/or lemon peel\*

2 small squares bittersweet chocolate *or* white  
chocolate, to garnish

Prepare **two 2-piece, 5-inch mini tart pans** by coating with lecithin spray baking coating.\*\* Set aside.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Combine cookie crumbs and butter spread in a mixing bowl. Using a pastry blender, work the ingredients until very well combined. Divide between prepared tart pans. Press crumbs across the bottom of the pan and just slightly up the sides, leaving no holes. Bake in preheated 325-degree F. oven for about 15 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Slide into a plastic bag and freeze if you are not planning to fill these tarts right away.

Place *ricotta* into a fine sieve or in a cheesecloth bag and set the sieve or hang the bag over a small bowl in the refrigerator to drain for 48 hours. *This is very important because the ricotta must drain very thoroughly or your filling will be runny.*

Using the food processor fitted with steel knife or an electric mixer, beat *very well-drained ricotta* cheese until *very smooth*, scraping down the sides as necessary. Add confectioners' sugar and vanilla extract. Process until, again, *very smooth*.

Turn cheese mixture into a small mixing bowl. Add *finely* chopped citron or peel. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

When ready to serve, using a pastry bag, pipe *ricotta* filling into the prepared cookie crumb tart shells.

Place on dessert plates. Embed a piece of chocolate into the cream to garnish, if desired.

Yields 2 servings

Notes: \*Citron is most often treated with sulfiting agents to keep the color light and “appealing.” Sulfite-free citron and citrus peels are available through mail order firms.

\*\*I found these tiny two-piece tart pans at a kitchen supply store. They are also available online.

This recipe may be halved or doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 13.1 g.; FAT = 15.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 54.2 g.;  
CALORIES = 406; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

## SPIRALIZED BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH SAGE AND PISTACHIOS

TPT - 27 minutes

*It isn't just adding sage and pistachios that makes this butternut squash dish different, combining butter and olive oil adds a uniquely flavorful nuance to the squash. Spiralizing the squash gives this dish a unique texture. Truly, the butternut squash, that most of us eat mashed with butter, is absolutely transformed; it really is unique.*

Neck of a medium butternut squash—peeled

1 1/2 teaspoons *extra virgin* olive oil

1/3 cup shelled pistachios—*preferably unsalted*

1 tablespoon *light* brown sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons *finely* chopped fresh sage

1 tablespoon butter

Using a **spiralizer**, fitted with noodle blade, spiralize squash to yield about 4 cupfuls. Trim spiralized squash to lengths of about 6 inches. Set aside briefly.

In a skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat olive oil. Add spiralized squash. Cover and allow to cook, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, using a **mini-food processor**, pulse pistachios until uniformly and coarsely chopped.

Add brown sugar, chopped sage leaves, and butter. Pulse until a coarse crumble forms. Sprinkle over spiralized squash in the skillet. Gently stir until butter in the pistachio–sage crumble melts. Turn into a heated serving dish.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.5 g.; FAT = 8.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.4 g.;  
CALORIES = 194; CALORIES FROM FAT = 38%

*We explored some ideas for breakfasts this past August.  
Next month I'd like to share more breakfast ideas with you,  
this time in the context of the Evolution of Cuisine.*

*Happy New Year!*

*See you next year,*

*Judy*

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

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