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

October 2020

THE POMEGRANATE – ANCIENT AND DIVINE

**Azerbaijani Legume Soup with Pomegranate
and Spinach**

Eggplant and Pomegranate Salad from Xian

Pears in Pomegranate Juice

Pomegranate – Tangerine – Lime Refresher

Soymeat in the Style of Persian Chicken *Fesenjan*

The sculpturally unique pomegranate is probably one of or even, perhaps, the most bizarre of the berries. Since it is formed from the ovary of a single flower, it is botanically a berry. Perhaps knowledge of this is what propelled Sandro Botticelli to unite the hands of the Madonna and her infant son over a pomegranate in his “Madonna of the Pomegranate.”

As a child, our daughter loved pomegranates. Well-covered by an apron, she would sit at the kitchen table, which was also well-covered, picking the seeds from a pomegranate and eating them with enthusiasm of discovery and the joy of satisfaction. Every fall I surprised her with the first “Chinese apple,” as they were often called for reasons that I still am unable to explain, that appeared in our market. From September through February pomegranates are available here in North America. Introduced to our hemisphere by the Spanish adventurers who followed the explorers, they are grown today in the dry climates of Southern California and Arizona. Pomegranates are available from South America from March through May.



Archaeological excavations in which the seeds and remnants of the leathery pericarp of pomegranates have been found suggest an origin in desert areas from Iran through Afghanistan and into Pakistan perhaps as early as the 5th millennium BC. Evidence of early cultivation is also found in Northern India. Further, Mediterranean marine excavations of ancient trading vessels have found that pomegranates were a valued luxury trade item since they were included in luxury cargoes containing gold, ivory, and perfume. The fruits are still grown in the same region of their origin and across the Middle East into the Mediterranean basin and up into the Caucasus, in Africa, South Asia, and Central Asia. They were introduced to the Southern Hemisphere and the American Southwest in the 1600s, where they are still grown. Attempts to grow them as far north as New England were understandably unsuccessful. Even Thomas Jefferson attempted cultivation of pomegranates at Monticello.

As with most berries the pomegranate is a source of phytonutrients and has been used in India's ancient Ayurveda medicine for centuries. It is still a tool in the "you are what you eat" medical bag. That is why a bottle of pure pomegranate juice is always in our refrigerator as a breakfast juice or as an exciting sweet/sour addition to many dishes.



With a few recipes for pomegranates, you won't have to wonder what to do with those pretty things you bought as decoration for your fall fruit bowl. Or, you could just cover your kitchen table with newspaper, put on an old apron, and enjoy. Explaining your red fingers and your bright lips to your family when they return home is part of the fun.

AZERBAIJANI LEGUME SOUP WITH POMEGRANATE AND SPINACH

TPT - 1 hour

The pomegranate's taste and its fabulous antioxidant advantages make it a superfood and that superfood can be used in dozens of recipes, many of which come from the Middle East and Central Asia where pomegranates have been grown for thousands of years. Versions of this Azerbaijani soup, which contain the nutrition of lentils, yellow split peas, and the complementary amino acids of rice, can be found in many countries in the region. Actually, my first introduction to this soup was from an old Persian cookbook.

1 1/2 tablespoons safflower or sunflower oil
1 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 cup thinly sliced onion
2 garlic cloves—crushed and finely chopped

2 tablespoons yellow split peas or channa dal
3 tablespoons brown (or, green) lentils

2 1/2 cups vegetarian stock of choice
2 1/2 cups pure pomegranate juice
1 teaspoon powdered angelica
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon sugar

1/4 cup dry, long grain, brown rice
8 ounces baby spinach—trimmed and well-rinsed
1/4 cup chopped fresh dillweed
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons shredded fresh mint leaves

Pine nuts (*pignoli*), for garnish
Dried or fresh, if available, home-grown, pesticide-free
rose petals, for garnish

In a small kettle set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add cumin seeds. Sauté for a minute or two until seeds begin to dance in the hot oil.

Add onion slices and *finely* chopped garlic. Sauté until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful to allow neither the onion nor the garlic to brown.*

Add yellow split peas and lentils. Sauté for about 5 minutes.

Add vegetable stock, pomegranate juice, angelica, salt, pepper, cinnamon, and sugar. Cook, stirring frequently, until the soup begins to boil.

Add rice, spinach leaves, and chopped dillweed, parsley, and mint. Cover and simmer for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Turn into a heated soup tureen.

Serve into heated soup bowls. Garnish with pine nuts (*pignoli*).

Yields about 6 cupfuls

Notes: This recipe makes a meal that is adequate for six servings making it a meal planner for us since the leftovers can be refrigerated and reheated for lunch the next day. When required, it can be doubled easily.

If convenient, leftovers can be frozen



1/6 SERVING (i. e., about 1 cupful exclusive of pine nuts) –
PROTEIN = 6.5 g.; FAT = 2.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 38.9 g.;
CALORIES = 208; CALORIES FROM FAT = 10%

EGGPLANT AND POMEGRANATE SALAD FROM XIAN

TPT - 26 minutes

Asian eggplants are much less bitter than are the large eggplants we general find in the grocery store. They are perfect for this recipe because they do not require peeling or salting and draining. The ancient city of Changan, now Xian, was on the famous “silk road” and the pomegranate of this classic recipe suggests an exchange with the Near East; the tomato suggests the influence of Portuguese traders.



1 tablespoon safflower or sunflower oil
1/2 cup very thinly sliced onion
1 garlic clove—crushed and finely chopped

**1 Japanese eggplant—about 1 pound—cut into
1-inch cubes and well-dried**
6 tablespoons pure pomegranate juice

1 Campari tomato—diced
1/2 teaspoon crushed dried mint
1/2 teaspoon sugar
Pinch salt
**Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, white,
and black—to taste**
Several dashes Spanish smoked paprika

1/2 teaspoon sesame oil

In a wok or large skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add onion slices and *very finely* chopped garlic. Sauté until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful to allow neither onion or garlic to brown. Reduce heat to LOW.*

Add eggplant cubes and pomegranate juice and cook, stirring frequently, for about 10 minutes.

Add diced tomato, crushed dried mint, sugar, salt, and black pepper. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring frequently, until eggplant is tender.

Add sesame oil. Stir to integrate. Remove from heat. Pour into a heated serving bowl.

Serve hot with rice, at room temperature, or cold, if preferred.

Yields 4 servings

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.2 g.; FAT = 3.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.2 g.;
CALORIES = 85; CALORIES FROM FAT = 40%



PEARS IN POMEGRANATE JUICE

TPT - 37 minutes;
30 minutes = refrigeration period

This is a convenient dessert, whether you have waited until the last minute to prepare a sweet, healthful ending to your meal or whether you want to prepare it in the morning before the activities of your life take you on an eight-hour ride. Pear halves canned in juice, cinnamon sticks, and pomegranate juice are items I always have in the house. In minutes, there is a dessert. At the holidays, when pomegranates are in the fruit bowl and time is precious, this dessert saves me time and the sparkle of the pomegranate seed garnish adds to the season.

4 pear halves canned in juice—well-drained

1/2 cup pure pomegranate juice

3/4 teaspoon sugar

1/2 cinnamon stick

Pomegranate seeds, for garnish, if available

In a shallow serving dish, arrange well-drained pear halves attractively. Set aside briefly.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, combine pomegranate juice, sugar, and the cinnamon stick. Cook, stirring constantly, until sugar is dissolved. Pour over pear halves. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Serve chilled or at room temperature, allowing two pear halves for each diner. Garnish each serving with a few pomegranate seeds, if desired.



Yields 2 individual servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.0 g.; FAT = 0.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.0 g.;
CALORIES = 109; CALORIES FROM FAT = 6%



POMEGRANATE – TANGERINE – LIME REFRESHER

TPT - 2 minutes

In years past we generally served soups as the first course for winter entertaining but sometimes we wanted to serve a soup as a main course with a salad and bread. That way we could indulge in a lovely, rich dessert and not have to say, “just a small piece please . . . oh, smaller, smaller, please.” This juice mixture stimulates the taste buds and is a perfect first course when presented in a champagne glass or brandy snifter with a large curled piece of organic lime peel looped over the edge of the glass.

1 3/4 cups pure, sweetened pomegranate juice
1 cup freshly squeezed tangerine juice
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice

In a pitcher or carafe, combine pomegranate, tangerine, and lime juices. Stir to combine. Refrigerate until required.

Serve chilled.

Yields 3 cupfuls

Note: This recipe can be halved or doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING (i. e., per 1/2 cupful) –
PROTEIN = 1.2 g.; FAT = 0.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 18.8 g.;
CALORIES = 79; CALORIES FROM FAT = 10%



**SOYMEAT IN THE STYLE OF
PERSIAN CHICKEN *FESENJAN***
Fesenjan

TPT - 31 minutes

Traditionally made with chicken or lamb, this celebratory Persian dish is fragrant with pomegranate and onions. The same remarkable seasoning can be used with the widely-available frozen soy meat product. We can celebrate too. In the fall and through the holidays pomegranates are available and therefore the seeds are available to garnish this dish. We never miss the opportunity.

1 cup unsweetened pomegranate juice

1/2 cup walnut pieces—*toasted*

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 medium onion—halved and sliced

3 ounces soy meat analogue strips—sliced

1/8 teaspoon saffron

1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 cup vegetarian stock of choice

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon honey

1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

Pomegranate seeds, for garnish, if available

In a non-stick-coated saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat pomegranate juice until it is reduced to 1/4 cupful. Set aside until required.

Meanwhile, using a food processor fitted with steel knife, process walnut pieces until coarsely chopped. Set aside until required.

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add onion slices. Sauté until onions are soft and translucent, *being careful not to allow onions to brown.*

Add soy meat slices, saffron, ground cinnamon and cardamom. Stir for several minutes.

Add prepared pomegranate juice reduction, stock, salt, and pepper. Stir well.

Add ground walnuts, honey, and lemon juice. Cook, stirring frequently, for about 15 minutes, or until heated through. Turn into heated serving bowl.

Serve over rice or *couscous*, garnished with pomegranate seeds.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of rice or *couscous*) –
PROTEIN = 9.7 g.; FAT = 16.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.9 g.;
CALORIES = 282; CALORIES FROM FAT = 54%

Meals are still part of our routine as more and more demands on time increase, seemingly exponentially, here at the end of the year.

Having a few dessert sauce ideas ready to roll can turn a simple dessert into something more than just the end of a meal.

And, oh, if someone should drop in . . .

Next month I'll share some that were popular years ago and seem forgotten today. "Everything old becomes new," or so they say.

Please drop by,

Judy

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

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