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

March 2022

OLIVE OIL, AN OIL THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

**Garlicky *Spaghettini* and Spiralized Butternut Squash
with Sautéed Soybean**

Israeli *Couscous* Salad with Red Onion

Italian Eggplant Salad

Italian Orange Salad

Lebanese Fried Eggs with *Feta* Cheese

Orange Olive Oil Cake

Spanish Spiced Cauliflower with Garlic

In late October, while traveling along a road outside of Pisa, Italy, we came upon what looked like the remains of a parachute that had recently landed in a tree. Great white sheets, tied to the end of branches, created quite an image. Family members surrounded the tree with long sticks. On cue, the harvest began. What seemed like random strikes against the tree's branches with the sticks soon produced a shower of ripe olives. The heavy sheets were gathered and spread in the sun to dry.

Archaeological evidence has confirmed that olive oil was pressed from olives as early as 6,500 BC. Study of the pollen record, a division of paleobotany, has been used to date the beginning of olive cultivation in the southern Levant to that same early date. Paleobotanic evidence also confirmed that cultivation in Crete began some years later, perhaps in the sixth millennium BC and much later in Anatolia, around 3,200 BC. Evidence found in the form of discarded olive pits at Neolithic sites has revealed that olives were gathered and presumably eaten by humans over 10,000 years ago.

Olive oil is not a health food as many would have you believe. Fat is fat and oil is fat. However, if you are planning to use oil for cooking or baking or for making a salad dressing then olive oil is a good choice.

One, olive oil contains monounsaturated fatty acids and is, therefore, a healthier fat, healthier than fats that contain saturated fatty acids. Extra virgin olive oil contains an even larger amount of monounsaturated fatty acids because extra virgin olive oil is extracted by cold pressing and is not refined further with solvents.

Two, the taste of olive oil nuances the flavor of a dish.

Before considering which oil to use, the smoke point should be an important consideration in your choice. Extra virgin olive oil has a low smoke point, about 390 degrees F., which means that food cooked in the unrefined olive oil must be cooked at low-medium heat. I use a standard, refined olive oil, tolerant of heat to 450 degrees F. and *high heat* safflower or sunflower oils, oils higher in polyunsaturated fatty acids, for sautéing and deep-frying tasks. The latter are tolerant of heat to 450 degrees F.

Another consideration is the source of your oil. Imported olive oil is often adulterated. In 2007, the Italian government issued regulations to control the olive oil export business. Routinely, only about forty percent of the oil in a bottle labeled extra virgin olive oil was actually the unrefined olive oil. In 2008, the EU took exception to the Italian regulations that required labeling and declared that such labeling need not be compulsory. Now, under EU rules a small amount of Italian oil in a bottle qualifies that bottling to be sold as “product of Italy.” In recent years, the Italian government has prosecuted several well-known olive oil companies for selling oil of lesser quality from countries other than Italy, including refined oil, as Italian extra virgin olive oil. This inability to completely trust the quality of European-sourced olive oil drove me to find a reliable domestic source of extra virgin olive oil by tasting varieties until I found a fruity full-flavored oil with nutty overtones. My rule is to dip bread in oil and taste it. If it tastes good to me on a piece of bread, I know it will add that same good flavor to the dishes I am preparing. I settled on a first cold press extra virgin olive oil made from the arbosana olive. Do be warned . . . “you may have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find a prince” but there are some really fine olive oils available from U. S. growers.

GARLICKY SPAGHETTINI AND SPIRALIZED BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH SAUTÉED SOYMEAT

TPT - 30 minutes

A fruity extra virgin olive oil is combined with butter to sauté soy meat and garlic in this quickly prepared spaghetti dish. The twist to what is a commonly prepared Italian pasta and chicken dish is the spiralized butternut squash. It isn't traditional but it is very good. Again, that little container of leftover pasta sauce in the freezer can come in handy.

Neck of small butternut squash—stem removed and peeled

3 quarts boiling water
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
One 3-inch strip organic lemon zest
4 ounces dry whole wheat or high-protein spaghetti
(thin spaghetti)

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
3 ounces frozen soy meat analogue strips—sliced to yield 3/4 cupful
2 garlic cloves—sliced

1/4 cup pasta sauce, of choice
2-3 tablespoons of reserved pasta cooking water

3 large basil leaves—well-rinsed and slivered—for garnish

Grated pecorino Romano cheese



Using a **spiralizer**, fitted with spaghetti-sized noodle blade, spiralize squash to yield about 2 cupfuls. Trim spiralized squash to lengths of about 6 inches. Set aside briefly.

In a large kettle set over **HIGH** heat, add lemon juice and lemon zest to *boiling* water. Break *spaghettini* in half. Add *spaghettini* and cook, stirring occasionally, over **HIGH** heat according to package directions, but *only until al dente*. Drain thoroughly, but retain cooking liquid. Discard lemon zest.

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil and butter. Add soymeat slices and garlic slices. Sauté until soymeat is lightly browned, *being careful not to allow garlic to brown*.

Add spiralized butternut squash, *spaghettini*, *pasta* sauce and *pasta* cooking water. Mix gently, but well, and cook until heated through. Turn out onto a heated serving platter.

Garnish with chiffonade of basil.

Serve at once. Pass grated cheese.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of grated cheese) –
PROTEIN = 13.9 g.; FAT = 7.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 33.2 g.;
CALORIES = 269; CALORIES FROM FAT = 26%



ISRAELI *COUSCOUS* SALAD WITH RED ONION

TPT - 1 hour and 22 minutes;
15 minutes = *couscous* cooling period;
30 minutes = salad refrigeration period

Contrary to my own guidance, I use extra virgin olive oil to brown the Israeli couscous. It adds incredible flavor to this salad and it is safe to use for browning the couscous at this low temperature. This is a favorite salad for a soup 'n salad dinner . . . or a picnic.

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1/3 cup Israeli couscous

2 cups water

1/4 cup finely chopped red onion
Italian herb seasoning, to taste*
2 1/2 tablespoons calorie-reduced or light mayonnaise

2 chilled, hard-cooked eggs
2 teaspoons calorie-reduced or light mayonnaise



In a saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add *couscous*. Cook, stirring constantly, until lightly browned. Remove from heat. *Reduce heat to LOW*.

Add water. Return to heat. Cover. Allow to cook for 6-8 minutes. Drain well. Turn into a mixing bowl. Allow to cool for 15 minutes.

Add *finely* chopped red onion and Italian herb seasoning. Toss. Add mayonnaise. Stir well. Turn into the center of a shallow serving dish.

Using an **egg slicer**, slice eggs and fan the slices out next to the *couscous* salad. Spoon a dollop of mayonnaise in the middle of each egg fan. Refrigerate for 30 minutes, before serving.

Yields 2 servings

Notes: *My Italian herb seasoning mixture was included in my May 2018 column. [*see recipe archive, May 2018*]

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 8.8 g.; FAT = 17.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 18.8 g.;
CALORIES = 247; CALORIES FROM FAT = 65%

ITALIAN EGGPLANT SALAD

Insalata di Melanzana

TPT - 2 hours and 15 minutes;
30 minutes = eggplant post-baking cooling period;
1 hour = eggplant marination period



The late summer harvest brings firm, beautiful eggplants and tomatoes, still kissed by the summer sun, to market side by side. Take advantage of the offering. By baking the eggplant, the texture desirable for this salad is achievable without the oil uptake that results from sautéing in oil. This salad is regarded as a pickled vegetable side in Italy but it makes a pleasant salad, a wonderful contrast to a mellow pasta entrée or a cheese tray. Be sure to choose a rich, nutty flavorful extra virgin olive oil; it's a must for this salad.

Again, a garnish of fennel pollen is the perfect garnish. Here, I also add fennel fronds to increase the fennel finish.



1 small (baby) eggplant

MARINADE:

A small garlic clove—*finely* chopped
1/4 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1/4 teaspoon crushed, *dried* oregano
1/4 teaspoon crushed, *dried* basil
Pinch crushed, *dried* thyme
1 tablespoon *marinated* capers
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

2 teaspoons *extra virgin* olive oil
2 tablespoons *well-drained* canned, *diced* tomatoes

1 *firm* medium tomato—sliced into four *thin* slices

Fennel fronds, for garnish
Fennel pollen, for garnish*

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Place the whole, well-rinsed eggplant on a baking sheet. Roast in preheated 375-degree F. oven, turning every 10 minutes or so, until the entire skin is blackened and blistered. Remove from oven and allow to cool for 30 minutes. Remove skin from eggplant. Chop into bite-sized pieces.

On a bread board, crush *finely* chopped garlic in salt until a paste forms. Turn into shallow bowl.

Add vinegar, crushed, dried oregano, basil, and thyme, capers, and black pepper. Toss. Allow the eggplant to marinate for 1 hour. Stir occasionally to expose all surfaces of eggplant pieces to marinade.

Add oil and diced tomatoes. Toss. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Arrange tomato slices, overlapping on a small platter. Spoon eggplant salad over the tomato slices.

Scatter fennel fronds over. Garnish with a sprinkling of fennel pollen.

Serve a tomato slice mounded with eggplant salad onto salad plates.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: *If anyone in your family has pollen allergies, omit the fennel pollen.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.1 g; FAT = 1.9 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 5.5 g.
CALORIES = 46; CALORIES FROM FAT = 37%



ITALIAN ORANGE SALAD
Insalata di Arancia con Olio d'Oliva

TPT - 40 minutes
30 minutes = refrigeration period

Orange slices make a nice dessert but, oh, what a salad you can make with just one orange and the best extra virgin olive oil you can find. I was introduced to this salad when we were first married since it was a favorite recipe, often served in my husband's family. In the summer, when the sweet Valencia oranges are available in my market, this salad appears on our table at least once a week. It is one of the easiest salads to assemble and, if you use a very flavorful olive oil, it can become one of the tastiest in your repertoire.

1 large Valencia or navel orange

1/4 cup sweet onion slivers

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil



Thinly slice *unpeeled* orange. Divide between two salad plates. Arrange overlapping.

Divide onion slivers between the two servings. Scatter over orange slices. Grind black pepper over. Drizzle olive oil over each. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to allow for flavor development.

Serve chilled with a salad fork and a fruit knife.

Yields 2 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.3 g.; FAT = 5.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.2 g.;
CALORIES = 107; CALORIES FROM FAT = 47%

LEBANESE FRIED EGGS WITH *FETA* CHEESE AND *ZA'ATAR*

TPT - 1 hour and 15 minutes;
1 hour = yogurt draining period

Fried eggs don't seem like a dinner entrée but during the months of the covid-19 pandemic eggs were frequently our protein choice. All ingredients were either in the house or available with my monthly grocery pickup. This Middle Eastern dish was welcome variety, so welcome that this recipe has often been revisited. The taste of the sumac in the za'atar is dramatic and ever enticing.

My mother-in-law, born and raised in an olive oil culture, always fried her eggs in olive oil; on the other hand, my family always fried eggs in butter. In this case, use the best tasting olive oil you can find.

2 tablespoons plain yogurt

1 tablespoon light sour cream

2 teaspoons olive oil

4 eggs

2 teaspoons za'atar seasoning*

1 tablespoon crumbled feta cheese

1/4 cup well-drained canned, diced tomatoes

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Pinch sugar



Set two automatic drip coffeemaker filters into a sieve over a medium-sized 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 1 hour. Turn into a small bowl. Add sour cream. Combine well. Turn into a serving dish. Set aside at room temperature until required.

Put a teaspoonful of oil into each of **two individual egg skillets**. Set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat.

Slide two eggs into each skillet. Sprinkle a teaspoonful of *za'atar* over each serving. Cook eggs over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat until eggs set and edges crisp. Slide each serving out onto a heated dinner plate.

Sprinkle 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls of crumbled *feta* cheese over each serving.

Spoon 2 tablespoonfuls of the *diced* tomatoes next to each egg serving. Grind a bit of black pepper over each tomato garnish. Sprinkle a bit of sugar over each.

Serve at once with yogurt–sour cream sauce.

Yields 2 servings

Notes: *If you don't make your own *za'atar*, mixtures are available in most well-stocked grocery stores and from mail order spice firms.

This recipe can be doubled as a skillet meal when prepared in a 10-inch skillet. If you have four individual egg skillets, all the better.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 15.3 g.; FAT = 16.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 1.7 g.;
CALORIES = 234; CALORIES FROM FAT = 62%

ORANGE OLIVE OIL CAKE

Pisciotti

TPT - 1 hour and 19 minutes;
30 minutes = cooling period

Whether you grew up in a butter culture or an olive oil culture, there are times when you know without a second thought that taste demands one or the other or, in some cases, both. Substituting olive oil for shortening in a cake is common in the olive growing areas of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. My attraction to the recipe was not because we have abundant harvests of olives but because:

*the use of the olive oil makes this cake low in saturated fats;
it can be assembled for baking in 9 minutes;
on a busy day it can bake while you are preparing the rest of your meal;
it cools while you are eating;
there are only two bowls, a small cake pan, and a wooden spoon to wash;
it is a wonderfully moist cake so leftovers do not dry out;
and the taste is remarkable.*

Use only the best extra virgin olive oil you can find.

3/4 cup sifted cake flour
1/2 cup sugar
3/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice with pulp
2 tablespoons orange pulp*
1 teaspoon freshly grated organic orange zest

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
6 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Confectioners' sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a **6-inch cake pan** by lining with waxed paper and then coating with lecithin spray baking spray.

In a small bowl, combine cake flour, sugar, baking powder, and baking soda. Mix well to combine. Set aside until required.

In a second mixing bowl, combine orange juice with pulp, orange zest, olive oil, pasteurized eggs, and vanilla extract. Using a wooden spoon, combine well.

While stirring, gradually add and integrate flour-sugar mixture. Turn into prepared cake pan. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for 40-45 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool completely. Remove cake from baking pan to a cake dish.

Sieve confectioners' sugar over totally cooled cake.

Yields 6 servings



Note: *There is an easy way to get the orange pulp you need for this recipe. Pour orange juice with pulp through a fine sieve. A half gallon of orange juice “with lots of pulp” will yield a significant quantity of pulp which can be frozen. Think of the possibilities with that on hand.

1/6 SERVING (i. e., per slice) –
PROTEIN = 2.6 g.; FAT = 15.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 15.1 g.;
CALORIES = 272; CALORIES FROM FAT = 50%

SPANISH SPICED CAULIFLOWER WITH GARLIC *Coliflor con Ajo*

TPT - 24 minutes

I loved to travel Out East on Long Island in late September and October. Yes, the changing of the seasons was always an exciting process to witness but to see the cauliflower leaves tied up around the floral heads and knowing that each cauliflower, when harvested, would be white as snow helped to make that process also promising. The garlic-infused butter-oil sauce used here gives a richness to an often maligned vegetable but one with a pedigree that is spectacular. Cauliflower is a member of the Brassica family, a family of vegetables known for their anti-cancer properties and that is reason enough to find new ways to prepare it.

Be sure to choose a fruity olive oil to maximize its flavor contribution.



4 large, fresh cauliflower florets
2 quarts boiling water

1 1/2 tablespoons butter
1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
2 garlic cloves—sliced

Chili powder
Ground cumin
Spanish *smoked* paprika*

4 pitted black olives, preferably *Kalamata*—sliced

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine cauliflower and *boiling* water. Allow cauliflower to boil for just 8 minutes. Drain well.

In a skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine butter, oil, and garlic slices. Sauté until garlic just begins to color.

Add parboiled cauliflower. Sauté until heated through, being careful not allow garlic to burn. Transfer only the cauliflower to a heated serving dish. Remove and discard garlic slices. Pour remaining butter and oil over the cauliflower.

Sprinkle a dash or two of chili powder over, a dash of ground cumin, and a *small* dash of Spanish *smoked* paprika.* Scatter olive slices over.

Serve at once.

Yields 2 servings



Notes: *A little smoked paprika can go a long way so use only a small dash and adjust it to your taste the next time you prepare this dish.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.2 g.; FAT = 17.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 6.7 g.;
CALORIES = 195; CALORIES FROM FAT = 82%

Both tea and coffee need not just be filed under beverages.

You probably love coffee ice cream.

How about chai ice cream?

Next month we'll look at some other ways in which tea can stimulate your life.

Please drop by,

Judy

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

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