

October 2023

**MORE CULINARY TOOLS  
THAT LEAD TO EXPERIMENTATION:**

*Breadmaker –*

**Milanese Sweet Christmas Bread**

**Sweet Egg Bread**

*Slow Cooker –*

**Basic Bean Preparation Using the Slow Cooker**

**Indian Simmer Sauce with “Soy Chicken”**

**Slow Cooker Vegetarian French Onion Soup**

**and what to do with the *Melon Baller***

**and the *Egg Slicer* in your kitchen drawer**

In a column in July 2021 I shared some of the recipes we enjoy and the preparation of which requires the use of a spiralizer. In November 2021 I shared recipes that benefit from the use of a mandoline. I also shared recipes for another favorite appliance in my column on the *panini* press. [See November 2021.] Back in April 2018 some uses for the slow cooker were explored. Appliances like these have greatly changed food preparation in my lifetime. They have made cooking interesting and our meal presentations more varied but they have also given us the extra moments for inspiration and experimentation.

When we set up the kitchen in our first apartment, finding good, cheap knives was the first project. They weren't imported; they didn't match; and they hadn't been rated by a food magazine. Our efficiency kitchen in a New York suburb was way too small to think about countertop appliances. There was a work space area of 23 inches by 20 inches. I have bread boards bigger than that now. My old toaster oven from graduate school days sat on a rolling “tea cart.” I had an old apple corer and somebody had given me a **melon baller** as a joke . . . so much for tools. I still have that melon baller and it is useful for creating stuffable boats out of zucchini or a yellow summer squash and for making tiny ice cream balls as a garnish for a serving of fruit or as a garnish for a simple slice of pound cake. I also use it to make potato and sweetpotato balls to add to my soups.



I was consumed with experimentation when I bought my first **breadmaker**, the machine that gained the moniker R2D2. The bread loaves were tall cylinders more like *panettone* than traditional bread loaves. It came with recipes; of course, I tried most of them. Books were written and more ideas poured into my kitchen. Three or four of those recipes became our daily loaves, adapted to the newer machines such as the Zojirushi which is my present breadmaker.

Letting the machine do the work, i. e., mixing and kneading, and taking over manually after the first rising now feels like I am still really baking bread. Creative additions and artistic shaping can, therefore, put you in charge of your own artisan bakery. My everyday Maple Multigrain Bread, which can be found in *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the*

*Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul, vol. II*, pp. 106-107, is a really contemporary loaf. My grandmother's basic white bread recipe, as wonderful as its crumb is, has been replaced in our house by a loaf loaded with whole grain nutrition. Unlike the "hippy loaves" I often reminisce about and the Cornell loaf of the 1930s with its soy flour and wheat germ, this loaf is not heavy. This month I am sharing two wonderful recipes for sweeter loaves. Both give you the chance to get your hands into it. These recipes are designed for use in the Zojirushi bread machine but do adjust the ingredient addition sequence specified by the manufacturer of your bread machine.

Very slow cooking can do wonders for food. Our colonial predecessors were taught by Native Americans how to bury a pot in hot coals to cook food slowly and, around the globe, that technique is still used. My family had an Anderson stove which had a cooking well that was used to accomplish much the same thing. Tough meat cuts benefitted greatly from this slow cooking. The Moroccan tagine may well be the cooking vessel from which the slow cooker evolved.

The **slow cooker** is, to some, not a particularly exciting appliance. It has a reputation of being a grandma's convenience tool. It also requires some cooking finesse or the ingredients "mush" together into a single unidentifiable taste. But, may I quickly add, it is a good tool for some culinary tasks like the Indian Simmer Sauce with "Soy Chicken" and the Slow Cooker French Onion Soup which I have included this month. Another task that the slow cooker can take over with aplomb is the cooking of dried beans. I have included my slow cooker recipe for cooking beans which I shared in *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*. It is a good recipe to have on hand. See the *recipe archive – April 2018* – for more ways in which this appliance can serve you.

How about a simple, inexpensive **egg slicer**? You can slice cucumbers, apples, bananas, firm strawberries, and kiwifruit with that tool which is probably sitting neglected in the back of the kitchen drawer.

Oh . . . one more thought . . . your **freezer**, no matter how big or small, don't forget how useful a tool that cold box can be. Think homemade ice cream or a frozen mousse or fresh berries in the middle of the winter.



*breadmaker -*

## MILANESE SWEET CHRISTMAS BREAD

### *Panettone*

TPT - 3 hours and 43 minutes;  
30 minutes = raisin rehydration period;  
1 hour and 50 minutes = automated machine  
preparation period\*

*Ray would always bypass panettone in favor of German stollen at Christmas until I evolved this recipe. There is no earthly reason to suffer a heavy, dry commercial panettone. You can easily make this moist, delicious loaf.*

*My old breadmaker, affectionately dubbed R2D2, turned out a loaf closer to the traditional panettone shape. Most breadmakers now turn out a standard loaf shape so this artisan bread must be finished off manually and baked in the oven. I now have a pandora, a star-shaped baking bowl, in which the bread can be baked to achieve a more traditional looking loaf, making it look more like the "stump," the "ciocco," of Milanese mythology.*

1/2 cup *preservative-free* raisins  
1 cup warm water  
1 tablespoon rum

3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons water  
1 1/2 tablespoons *frozen* orange juice concentrate  
—*defrosted or orange pulp*\*\*

4 cups bread flour  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
5 tablespoons sugar  
3 tablespoons *non-fat, dry* milk powder  
5 tablespoons butter—*sweet or lightly salted, as preferred*  
—*chopped into small chunks*  
3 tablespoons *fat-free* pasteurized eggs  
3/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 1/2 teaspoons *preservative-free* active dried yeast\*\*\*

1/4 cup *preservative-free* chopped citron

2 tablespoons butter—*softened to room temperature*

Confectioners' sugar



In a mixing bowl, rehydrate raisins in the 1 cupful warm water to which rum has been added for 30 minutes. Drain thoroughly.

Prepare a ***panettone* baking pan or sleeve or a *pandora* pan** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating. Dust with flour. Set aside until required.

Bring all ingredients except warm water to room temperature.

Put water and orange juice concentrate into the bread pan of the **bread machine**.

Add flour, salt, sugar, and dry milk spreading the dry ingredients over the liquid as you add them. *Do not stir*. Leave an area at one end of loaf for the yeast. Scatter the butter chunks at the other end of the bread pan. Pour pasteurized eggs and vanilla extract into the same area.

Using a spoon, create a depression in the dry ingredients, being very careful not to press down into the liquid layer below. Pour yeast into the depression.

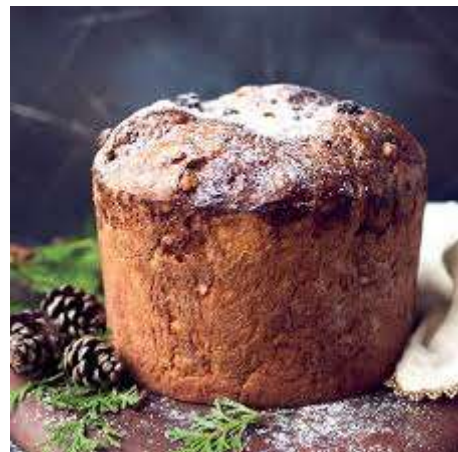
Select DOUGH SETTING or setting that will *stop after second rising, before third rising and baking functions*. Push START.

Remove the dough from mixing pan to floured surface. Add drained raisins and citron. Knead gently to work the fruits uniformly through the dough. Shape into a tight ball. Place in prepared *pandora* pan or *panettone* sleeve. Place a piece of waxed paper over the baking dish and cover with a cotton tea towel. Allow to rise in the warm kitchen for about 1 hour, or until doubled in size.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Using a very sharp knife or a *lame*, cut an **X** or a **+** into the top of the risen loaf. Gently spread the softened butter over the area where the **X** has been cut.

Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for 40-45 minutes, or until the loaf “thumps” hollow. If loaf begins to brown too quickly, place a small square of aluminum foil over the top of the loaf to finish baking.



Remove from oven, turn loaf out onto wire rack and allow to cool completely. Dust with confectioners' sugar.

Yields one 1 1/2-pound loaf  
—about 20 slices

Notes: \*Preparation time depends, of course, on the brand of bread machine which you are using.

\*\*“Most pulp” or “lots of pulp” orange juice is a convenient source of orange pulp for baking recipes or for puddings. Simply drain orange juice through a fine sieve.

\*\*\*Some packaged dried yeast available in grocery stores contain a preservative. Natural food stores carry an additive-free dried yeast. In addition, *do not use so-called fast action yeasts*. The results will not please you. Wild yeast is traditionally used in Milan to make this specialty. It is a chancy procedure and is better left to the professionals.

1/20 SERVING (i. e., per slice) –  
PROTEIN = 3.9 g.; FAT = 1.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 29.0 g.;  
CALORIES = 144; CALORIES FROM FAT = 9%

## SWEET EGG BREAD

TPT - 4 hours and 17 minutes;  
4 hours and 13 minutes = automated machine preparation period\*

*When we stayed with my grandmother, the response to “I’m hungry, Grandma” was “If you are really hungry, bread and butter should be enough.” Sometimes a sprinkling of sugar on the bread mitigated the disappointment because we were hoping for a dish of the tapioca or rice pudding cooling in the butler’s pantry. I have since learned the lesson my grandmother was trying to teach. A slice of bread with butter can be a very special treat when the bread is this dense, gloriously golden sweet bread.*

**3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons water—heated to about  
95 degrees F.**

**3 cups bread flour**  
**2 tablespoons oat flour**  
**1/2 teaspoon salt**  
**5 tablespoons sugar**  
**1 1/2 tablespoons non-fat, dry milk powder**  
**1 tablespoon cold butter—cut into chunks**  
**1/4 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs or 1 egg**  
**—lightly beaten**

**2 teaspoons preservative-free active dried yeast\*\***

Bring all ingredients except warm water to room temperature.

Put water into the bread pan of the **bread machine**.

Add bread and oat flours, salt, sugar, and dry milk spreading the dry ingredients over the liquid as you add them. *Do not stir*. Leave an area at one end of loaf for the yeast. Scatter the butter chunks at the other end of the bread pan. Pour beaten egg into the same area.

Using a spoon, create a depression in the dry ingredients, being very careful not to press down into the liquid layer below. Pour yeast into the depression.

Select DOUGH OR MANUAL SETTING or setting that will *stop after second rising, before third rising and baking functions*. Push START.

When cycle has been completed, turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth and all trace of stickiness is gone. Prepare a **9 x 5 x 3-inch non-stick-coated loaf pan** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating. Form dough into a loaf. Place in prepared pan. Allow bread to rise in a warm, draft-free kitchen until doubled in volume—about 45 minutes. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for about 40-45 minutes. Turn out of baking pan and cool completely on a wire rack before slicing and serving.

Yields 1 loaf  
of about 16 slices

Notes: \*Preparation time depends, of course, on the brand of bread machine which you are using.

\*\*Some packaged dried yeast available in grocery stores contain a preservative. Natural food stores carry an additive-free dried yeast. In addition, *do not use so-called fast action yeasts*. The results will not please you.

I often add 3/4 teaspoonful ground cardamom to this recipe. The bread tastes remarkably like *hvetekake*, a Norwegian specialty.

1/2 cupful *preservative-free* raisins may be kneaded into dough before forming the loaf to create a perfectly wonderful sweet egg raisin bread.

1/16 SERVING (i. e., per slice) –  
PROTEIN = 3.8 g.; FAT = 1.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 18.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 98; CALORIES FROM FAT = 9%



slow cooker:

## BASIC BEAN PREPARATION USING THE SLOW COOKER

TPT - 19 hours and 5 minutes;  
12 hours = overnight soaking period  
[slow cooker: 7 hours at HIGH]

*The time that must be devoted to cooking dried beans can often drive people to the over-salted, canned beans that all of us keep on hand just in case we forget to “put the beans to soak” the night before. The slow cooker, I find, just cooks the beans and lets me get on with my life. If you want firm beans, the alternative method for cooking beans, which does not require overnight soaking, tends to produce beans that fall apart during the final slow cooking. If you are planning to purée the beans for your recipe, of course, this is not a problem.*



**1 cup dry beans\***  
**3 cups water**

**5 cups boiling water**

Rinse dry beans in several changes of water. Remove and discard any of poor quality. Place in a bowl with the 2 cupfuls of water and soak overnight in the refrigerator.

Preheat **slow cooker** to HIGH.

In the morning, drain beans and place in the bowl of the slow cooker. Add *boiling* water. Cover and cook in slow cooker for 7 hours at HIGH.\*\*

Use cooked beans in any recipe that calls for beans or freeze, with a bit of liquid, for future menu plans.

Yields about 1 1/2 cupfuls

Notes: \*The time needed to cook a particular bean may differ so attention is required the first time you use this method for a different legume.

\*\*A *bouquet garni*, stuffed with flavoring items such as herbs and vegetables, can be tucked into the beans as they cook to provide subtle flavoring. It is advisable to move it around during the cooking process to more evenly flavor the beans.

This recipe may be prepared well in advance, even the day before, if convenient, and refrigerated until required. Simply reheat over *LOW* heat.

When required, this recipe is easily doubled.

## INDIAN BUTTER SIMMER SAUCE WITH “SOY CHICKEN” *Murgh Makhani*

TPT - 5 hours and 30 minutes;  
[30 minutes = slow cooker at HIGH;  
4 hours and 30 minutes = slow cooker at LOW]

*Butter chicken, a beautifully seasoned dish from northern India, knows no boundaries today. Everybody loves it. We can have that pleasure too. It isn't President Hoover's “chicken in every pot” but it will do just fine for our lifestyle. The rich simmer sauce is other-worldly thanks to the ultra-slow cooking method.*



3 tablespoons butter  
1 1/2 teaspoons grated *fresh* gingerroot  
1 1/2 teaspoons *garam masala* blend, of choice  
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric  
Dash or two ground red pepper (cayenne)  
2 medium garlic cloves—*crushed and very finely* chopped

1 cup canned, *diced* tomatoes  
1/2 cup *thinly* sliced onions

4 ounces *frozen* soymeat strips

1/4 light cream *or* half and half\*

Preheat **slow cooker** to HIGH.

In the bowl of the slow cooker, combine butter, grated fresh gingerroot, *garam masala*, ground cumin, ground turmeric, ground red pepper (cayenne), and *crushed and very finely* chopped garlic. Cover and allow for the seasoning of the butter, stirring occasionally for 30 minutes. *Reduce setting to LOW.*

Add diced tomatoes and onion slices. Stir to coat with butter. Cover. Allow to cook for 4 hours at LOW. Stir occasionally.

Add soymeat strips and cream. Cover and allow to cook for 30 minutes more. Turn into heated serving bowl.

Serve over steamed rice.

Yields 4 servings



Note: \*Traditionally, heavy cream is the finish to this sauce. If you prefer a less rich sauce, as do I, light cream or half and half gives a very satisfactory result.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 12.9 g.; FAT = 12.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 8.7 g.;  
CALORIES = 187; CALORIES FROM FAT = 58%

## SLOW COOKER VEGETARIAN FRENCH ONION SOUP

### *Soupe à l'Oignon*

TPT - 8 hours and 36 minutes;  
[slow cooker: 8 hours at LOW]

*A kettle of homemade potato soup will predictably be on the menu for a friend when a weekend snowstorm is forecasted. It is her go-to comfort soup. I love a hearty minestrone or a creamy squash bisque or a cream of broccoli soup but this onion soup may well be my all-time winter favorite. French onion soup always was the centerpiece of a comfort event for us back before we became vegetarians. We used to stop into a favorite bistro in New York City where their onion soup and fabulous Caesar salad completely revived us. A vegetarian version evolved over the years culminating in this overnight, slow cooker soup. The texture is soft and lush, and it is oh so easy to prepare. I usually start this soup in the morning while I am doing my food prep. for the day. When the soup is done, I refrigerate it overnight for the next day's meal. All you need to round out the meal is a supply of warm French bread, a salad, and, maybe, a piece of fruit for dessert.*

2 cups vegetarian stock of choice

1 1/2 cups *boiling* water  
3 tablespoons white wine  
2 tablespoons butter  
1 teaspoon *light* brown sugar  
1 bay leaf  
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves—*finely* chopped  
1 garlic clove—sliced

1 tablespoon *tamari* soy sauce  
1 tablespoon tomato paste  
3 large yellow onions—peeled and *thinly* sliced

Salt, to taste\*  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste\*

4 *thick* slices French *baguette*

2 cups shredded Swiss *Gruyère* cheese



In a saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat allow vegetarian stock to come to the simmer.

Meanwhile, preheat **slow cooker** to *LOW*.

In the bowl of the preheated slow cooker, combine *boiling* water, wine, butter, brown sugar, bay leaf, *finely* chopped thyme leaves, and garlic slices. Cover and allow butter to melt.

Add soy sauce and tomato paste. Stir well. Add *hot* vegetarian stock and onion slices. Cover and allow to cook for 8 hours. Stir occasionally. Remove and discard bay leaf. Turn into a saucepan and refrigerate until about 20 minutes before you plan to serve.

Set the saucepan over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat. Allow to heat to the boil, stirring frequently. Taste your soup at this point and adjust seasoning with salt and/or pepper, if necessary.\*

Divide the onion soup among four heated, *oven-proof* onion soup crocks or soup bowls. Float a slice of bread on each serving. Sprinkle 1/2 cupful of shredded cheese over each serving. Place soup crocks about 8 inches below broiler unit. *Turn broiler on to the lowest setting. Broil until cheese just begins to brown.*

*Serve at once.*

Yields 4 main-course servings

Notes: \*If desired, the soup may be frozen at this point. We go on to prepare two servings and freeze the remainder for a future meal.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 21.0 g.; FAT = 29.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 29.6 g.;  
CALORIES = 340; CALORIES FROM FAT = 80%



*Chocolate has always an exalted place  
on my holiday dessert table,  
as those of you who have made this “Vegetarian Journey” with me well know.  
This year I thought the prospect of both chocolate and coffee on the menu  
might be invitation enough for you to drop by,*

*Judy*

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

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