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

October 2016

SWEETPOTATOES, CASSEROLES:

Canadian Potato and Sweetpotato Scallop

Vegetable Slow Cooker *Ragoût* in the Style of Argentina

Casserole of Winter Vegetables

One of the great innovations of the Anderson Stove Company, a post-World War II stove manufacturer based in Indiana, was a deep well that could slow cook, unattended, for hours. In the late 1940s we had an Anderson stove with the cooking well. Early on a Sunday morning my mother would put a roast into the well with vegetables. When we came home from church, the house was filled with the aroma of our dinner. Today the slow cooker, introduced as the Crock Pot in 1971 by the Rival Company, provides the same slow, low-temperature cooking as did the enamel-ware well in my mother's stove.

The oven well and the slow cooker can be traced back to the *tagine* cooking of North Africa and the Cypriot *tavvas*, early examples of a cooking technique we now take for granted. The Iroquois people of North America made slow-cooked casseroles too by combining ingredients in a clay pot which they buried over hot coals; a technique they taught to the European settlers. The Cypriots, to this day, use a similar cooking procedure which reduces the amount of cooking fuel

required, an important consideration to this island nation. Centuries of deforestation limit the use of wood for heating and cooking requiring costly importation of fuel.

The Dutch oven is a more direct connection to the modern casserole concept. The Dutch oven really was Dutch. In the 1500s, the Dutch produced cooking vessels using their advanced sand-casting technique. So fine were their metal pots that they were imported into England. By the 1700s the British were producing a similar cooking vessel which continued to be called a Dutch oven. The British shipped their cooking pots to the American and Canadian colonies.

By the twentieth century the concept of a whole meal baked in a single cooking pot blossomed; whether it be in a Dutch oven, in a soufflé dish, or in another oven-to-table baking vessel. The one-dish meal became a part of American cuisine, a family dish that fits into the American way of life.

Last month I discussed the true classification of the sweetpotato. We do not need to wade through that again so let's move on and visit three favorite casseroles.

Sweetpotatoes and potatoes are both tubers but of unrelated plants as I discussed in my last column. They, however, meet beautifully in a casserole which my family often served. When you grow up in upstate New York, the border to our neighbor to the North gets blurred; nobody ever mentioned that this casserole was Canadian in origin. It was too good to quibble.

In the second casserole presented here both sweetpotatoes and white potatoes are also combined. It is an Argentine casserole that I have adapted to the slow cooker. We rarely think to add fruit to our entrée casseroles here in the United States but all over the world cooks enhance the taste and texture of their dishes with fruits.

Adding cranberries to an assortment of winter vegetables seems a perfect first step if you are venturing into this concept for the first time. The third casserole presented below is a perfect autumn or winter side dish.

CANADIAN POTATO AND SWEETPOTATO SCALLOP

TPT - 1 hour and 35 minutes

Sweetpotatoes or yams, as they have come to be called in North America, are neither potatoes nor true yams and are members of the Morning Glory family while potatoes are members of the Nightshade family. Classification notwithstanding, they pair well with potatoes in this dish

2 medium Idaho potatoes—peeled and *thinly* sliced

2 medium sweetpotatoes or yams—peeled and *thinly* sliced*

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground *white* pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon butter

1 1/2 tablespoons whole wheat flour

1 cup *one-percent* milk

2 large shallot cloves—*finely* chopped

Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Prepare a ceramic quiche dish or *au gratin* dish by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Working from the edge of prepared baking dish, arrange *thinly* sliced potatoes in a spiraling pattern, alternating rows between white potatoes and sweetpotatoes. Sprinkle *lightly* with salt and *white* pepper. Repeat spiraled layers, if necessary.

In a saucepan set over *LOW* heat, melt butter. Remove from heat and, using a wire whisk, make a *roux* by beating in flour. Return to heat and, stirring constantly, cook for 2 minutes, *being careful not burn or overbrown the roux*. Remove from heat and gradually beat in milk. Return saucepan to heat and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Pour prepared white sauce over potatoes.

Scatter *finely* chopped shallots over. Grate nutmeg over.

Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake in preheated 325 degree F. oven for 1 hour. Uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Serve directly from baking dish.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Note: This recipe is easily halved or doubled, when required. Use an appropriately smaller or larger baking dish when doing so.

1/5 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.5 g.; FAT = 2.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 23.0 g.;
CALORIES = 129; CALORIES FROM FAT = 17%

VEGETABLE SLOW COOKER *RAGOÛT* IN THE STYLE OF THE ARGENTINE

Carbonada Crioli sin Carne de Vaca

TPT - 7 hours
2 hours = dried fruit soaking period;
[slow cooker: 2 hours at HIGH;
2 hours at LOW]

“What is carbonada criolla? “. . . meat, vegetables, and fruits.” “Well, can we just ditch the meat?” “Oh no, it is a beef stew.” . . . a conversation? No, this became more like a challenge. This is a stew, popular in Argentina and usually served in a hollowed-out pumpkin or squash, but, yes, it is a beef stew filled with vegetables and fruits . . . and why not ditch the beef? To enjoy it we did make some changes and when cooked in a slow cooker, it can be easily ready for a same-day dinner or for the next day’s lunch.

3 dried preservative-free apricot halves
2 dried, pitted, preservative-free prunes
1/2 cup boiling water

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1/2 medium onion—chopped

1 large garlic cloves—*finely* chopped
1 large bay leaf—broken in half
2 whole cloves
1 tablespoon dried oregano—crumbled
2/3 small red bell pepper—well-washed, cored, seeded, and chopped

1 cup *diced*, canned tomatoes with liquid
1 small golden Yukon potato—peeled and diced
1/2 small sweetpotato—peeled and diced
1 cup canned kidney beans—well-drained

Reserved fruit soaking water

1/2 cup fresh *or* frozen corn kernels
1/2 medium zucchini—diced

3 firm, canned pear halves—chopped

The neck of a butternut squash, peeled and sliced into six 1/2-inch slices

In a small bowl, combine apricot halves, prunes, and *boiling* water. Allow fruits to rehydrate for at least 2 hours. Drain, *reserving soaking water*, and chop fruit. Set aside until required.

Preheat the slow cooker set at HIGH.

Add olive oil, chopped onion, *finely* chopped garlic, bay leaf pieces, whole cloves, and crumbled dry oregano. Cook, stirring frequently, until onion begins to soften. Remove and discard bay leaf pieces and whole cloves.

Add chopped pepper, diced tomatoes with liquid, diced potato and sweetpotato, and drained kidney beans. Stir gently. *If and when more water is required, add the fruit soaking water that has been reserved.* Allow to cook for 2 hours.

Reduce slow cooker temperature to LOW. Add corn, diced zucchini, and chopped apricots and prunes. Cover and allow to cook for 2 hours more.*

Set up the steamer. Steam butternut squash slices until tender.

Add chopped pears to ingredients in slow cooker bowl. Cover and allow to cook for 15 minutes more.

Turn *ragoût* into a heated serving bowl. Place a squash slice onto each heated dinner plate or large soup plate.

Ladle some of the *ragoût* over each squash slice. Pass the rest of the vegetables to accommodate individual tastes.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4-6 people

Note: *This can be prepared to this point the day before it is to be served. Add pears and reheat about 1 hour before serving.

When served for dinner, you may want to serve it in a baked pumpkin shell or squash shell. It is a dramatic presentation.

Leftovers can be frozen but should be defrosted completely before reheating to preserve the vegetable textures of the original.



1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.5 g.; FAT = 2.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 36.4 g.;
CALORIES = 193; CALORIES FROM FAT = 12%

CASSEROLE OF WINTER VEGETABLES

TPT - 1 hour and 17 minutes

When this vegetable dish appears on the table, we all know that the sun will be setting early for many months to come.

1/2 pound sweetpotatoes—pared and sliced into 1/8-inch slices	2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
1/2 pound parsnips—pared and sliced into 1/8-inch slices	1 teaspoon corn starch
3/4 pound butternut squash—pared, halved, seeded, and cut into 1/8-inch slices	3/4 cup canned whole cranberry sauce*
3 quarts boiling water	2 tablespoons butter
	1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

Prepare an *au gratin* dish, ceramic quiche dish, or other shallow oven-to-table baking dish by coating with lecithin spray coating.

Parboil sweetpotato slices for 5 minutes in *boiling* water. Using a slotted spoon, remove sweetpotato slices to a plate. Parboil parsnip slices for 6 minutes in *boiling* water. Using a slotted spoon, remove parsnip slices to a separate plate. Parboil butternut squash slices for 2 minutes in *boiling* water. Using a slotted spoon, remove squash slices to a plate.

Arrange vegetables in concentric, overlapping circles in prepared baking dish.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

In a small dish or cup, combine lime juice and corn starch. Stir until corn starch is completely in suspension.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine whole cranberry sauce, butter, and ground ginger. When simmering, stir in corn starch and lime juice. Cook, while stirring constantly, for a minute or two, until thickened slightly. Spoon cranberry mixture over arranged, parboiled vegetables. Cover with aluminum foil.

Bake in preheated 375 degree F. oven for 35 minutes. Uncover and cook for an additional 10 minutes.

Serve hot.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Notes: *I included a number of cranberry sauces in *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul* and I have used several of those to make this recipe at one time or another.

This recipe may be doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.6 g.; FAT = 4.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 27.2 g.;
CALORIES = 184; CALORIES FROM FAT = 22%

*Next month I plan to share some recipes for celery and fennel,
both of which have much more possibility than I could ever have imagined
when confronted with the ubiquitous relish tray of the 1950s.*

If you're not too busy, drop by,

Judy

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