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Holiday (or Anytime) Recipes for Mendonoma Health Alliance

Creamy Winter Squash and Apple Soup

I must make winter squash soup at least twenty different ways, depending upon the type of squash and how I season it. This soup has high fiber apple added, as well as coconut milk to make it richer or if you want it lighter, use coconut water. If you don't like curry, then just add turmeric and other of your favorite herbs or spices. Cardamom is heart healthy. This soup is savory and a bit sweet. It freezes well, too. Be sure to get low sodium or unsalted stock or broth or make your own.

Serves 6 to 8

2 cups finely chopped onion
2 to 3 teaspoons (or more) curry powder
1 medium to large kabocha type or butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed to equal at least 5 cups
1 apple (any kind), peeled and diced
4 cups vegetable stock
1½ cups coconut milk or coconut water
½ teaspoon salt
Pinch of freshly ground cardamom
½ teaspoon grated lime or lemon zest
1 to 2 teaspoons lime or lemon juice
Freshly ground black pepper
Chopped cilantro or parsley, for garnish

Heat a stovetop pressure cooker over medium heat or set an electric cooker to sauté. Add the onion and dry sauté or 3 minutes. Add the curry powder, squash, diced apple, stock, coconut milk, and salt.

Lock the lid on the cooker. Bring to high pressure; cook for 4 minutes. Let the pressure come down naturally. Remove the lid, carefully tilting it away from you.

Using an immersion blender, blender, or food processor, blend the soup until it is smooth and creamy. Add the salt, lime or lemon zest and juice, freshly ground black pepper to taste. Garnish with cilantro or parsley.

Note: to cook on the stove top, saute the onion, then simmer the soup for 20 minutes or more until the squash is soft. Then proceed with the recipe.

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Lemon Scented Spinach Spread

This is a tasty way to get people to eat more vegetables. It is far healthier than the spinach dip that many have gotten used to. You can use this to make wrap sandwiches as well as using it as a dip.

1 10 ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed, drained and squeezed dry
1/2 cup chopped green onions
1/2 package Mori Nu silken lite or regular tofu (in a box on the shelf)
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, to taste
1 teaspoon lemon zest (be sure to zest before juicing)
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1-2 teaspoons unrefined or coconut sugar, to taste
Salt and pepper, to taste
Lemon zest and lemon slices for garnish

Combine the spinach and green onions in the food processor and pulse. Add the tofu, lemon juice and zest, and mustard. Process until smooth. Add salt, pepper, lemon juice and sweetener, to taste. (If using Meyer lemons and their juice, you won't likely need sweetener.)

Serve immediately after making it or make a day ahead and serve chilled. If you make it ahead be sure to taste before serving as sometimes the flavors get muted. Garnish with twisted lemon slices and lemon zest strips.

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Simple Cauliflower Mash

Cauliflower has become quite popular in the past few years, for good reason: it is tasty but not powerful and it is low in calories. It stands in well for mashed potatoes in its look. You can always combine cauliflower with potatoes to cut the carbohydrates in your dish if you don't want only cauliflower. Here I combine celery root with the cauliflower for more body.

Serves 4 to 6

3 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup vegetable stock
4 to 6 cups cauliflower florets (1 small head)
1 cup 2-inch diced peeled celery root (also called celeriac)
1/2 to 3/4 cup plant milk
Plant-based butter or butter, optional
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cook garlic and stock with cauliflower and celery root until they are cooked through. Mash and season. Serve hot.



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Wild Rice with Nuts, Seeds and Fruit

Serve as a side dish or stuff a squash such as kabocha, buttercup or white pumpkin with this mixture. In any case it is delicious.

(Based on a recipe found in *Gourmet Vegetarian Feasts*, Martha Rose Shulman, Thorsons, 1987)

Serves 8 to 10

- 1 1/2 cups wild rice
- 4 1/2 cups water
- 2 small apples, peeled, cored, cut in half crosswise and sliced thinly
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds or toasted hazelnuts or walnuts
- 1/4 cup toasted pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup raisins or dried cranberries, soaked in 1/4 cup hot water for at least 30 minutes to 1 hour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon cardamom
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cook wild rice in the water for 55 to 60 minutes until the rice grains are split open (or cook in the pressure cooker with 3 cups water for 25 minutes at high pressure with a natural pressure release).

When done, drain rice from cooking water and put in a large bowl.

While the rice is cooking, soak the dried fruit in water for at least 30 minutes. Drain and save the liquid to use if necessary.

Heat a large heavy skillet over medium heat and sauté apples, almonds and pumpkin seeds about 2 minutes.

Add 2 tablespoons of the drained fruit soaking water and the spices, cooked wild rice, drained raisins and cranberries, and salt to taste. Cook together another few minutes, stirring. Correct seasonings, adding lots of pepper if you like it. Remove from heat.

Serve mounded on a plate or stuff into a partially pre-baked squash and bake in the oven at 350° F. for 30 to 45 minutes until the squash is thoroughly cooked and hot.

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Lentil, Mushroom and Walnut Pate

Be liberal with your use of parsley, as this dish does not have brilliant colors despite its lively taste. This freezes well so if you have leftovers, freeze them in usable amounts.

Mushrooms are a super food to include in daily eating.

Serves 8 to 10, as an appetizer or half as much if used as a main course

- 1 cup dried green or brown lentils
- 1/2 ounce dried wild mushrooms
- 2 medium leeks, white part only, chopped
- 1/2 pound crimini mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1/2 cup finely chopped toasted walnuts plus 1/4 cup toasted halves for topping
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme or 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 4 tablespoons rolled oats or oat flour
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 4 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley

Pick over the lentils and put them in a pot. Cover with water and let them cook until they are soft, 35 to 45 minutes. Drain, reserving liquid, and set aside.

Pour boiling water over the dried wild mushrooms and let them soak for 15 to 30 minutes.

Heat the medium skillet. Add the leeks and dry sauté for 2 to 3 minutes. Squeeze the water out of the wild mushrooms (saving the water) and add the mushrooms to the pan along with the crimini mushrooms, minced garlic and 1/2 cup walnuts. Cook over medium heat until the mushrooms release their liquid, about 10 to 13 minutes. Add the thyme and oats and cook for 4 to 5 minutes longer.

Puree mushroom mixture in the food processor with the lentils and vinegar, adding 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper and 1/4 teaspoon paprika. If the mixture seems too thick, add some lentil cooking liquid or mushroom soaking liquid. Taste and add salt, if necessary.

Line a 3 to 4 cup terrine or narrow 10 X 4 inch bread pan with parchment or wax paper. Sprinkle the parsley and 1/4 cup walnuts over the paper and add the lentil-mushroom mixture. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes until cooled down.

When ready to serve, unmold the pate by pulling at the paper lining to ease the pate from the sides of the pan. Set a platter over the pate and then invert. Ease the pan off the pate, then peel off the paper. Surround the pate with sprigs of parsley and cherry tomatoes, if in season.

Serve at room temperature with vegetables, crackers or toasted bread.