

# Asparagus, Fennel and Pea Pilau

This recipe became my go-to over the summer when there were greater appetites to satisfy vs. time. There are countless variations, so let your imagination and your CSA farm box dictate the ingredients. Over the summer I subbed in cut green beans from the garden, chunks of baby summer squash and always a healthy portion of sliced mushrooms.

## Asparagus, fennel and pea pilau

Prep 10 min

Soak 20 min

Cook 30 min

Serves 4

350g basmati rice

750ml prepared vegetable stock

3 tbsp coconut or sunflower oil

2 red onions, peeled and finely sliced

2 green finger chillies, very finely sliced

1 medium fennel bulb (about 250g), trimmed and thinly sliced

250g asparagus, woody ends trimmed and cut into 4cm-long pieces

200g frozen petit pois, defrosted

1½ tsp ground cumin

1½ tsp garam masala

¾ tsp salt

1 big handful mint leaves, chopped

1 big handful dill, chopped

1 lemon, cut into wedges, to serve

Wash the rice in cold water until it runs clear, then leave to soak for 20 minutes. Put the rice in a large saucepan for

which you have a lid and pour over the stock. Cover the pan, bring to a boil, boil for two minutes, then turn down the heat to a whisper and leave to cook for 10-12 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave the rice, still covered, to steam through until needed.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large, lidded pan on a medium flame. Once hot, add the onions and cook for six to eight minutes, until translucent and softening, but not yet coloured. Add the chillies, cook for another two minutes, then stir in the fennel and a couple of tablespoons of water, and cover the pan. Leave to cook for eight minutes, until soft. Add then the asparagus, peas, cumin, garam masala and salt. Stir, cover again, cook for three to five minutes more, then take off the heat.

Fold the herbs and rice into the vegetable mixture – breaking up any clumps of rice delicately with your hands – then transfer to a serving dish and serve with wedges of lemon on the side.

Adapted from Meera Sodha, *The New Vegan*, The Telegraph

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## The Meaning of Home

As expected, my return to Austin this weekend has been a unique experience. Each August for the past ten years I have returned from Europe like clockwork to our home on Mary Street. That first week is always the most challenging. Adjusting from the slower, quieter village life days in Europe to the abrupt shift of urban stimulation takes some effort. Before long, however, I'm able to rediscover my personal "Austin-zone".

The summer images of still, damp forests, toes in icy streams, the visual beauty of historic architecture, and heartwarming visits with German relatives fade all too quickly. But soon these images are replaced with the ever-changing beauty of morning swims at Barton Springs, the evolving Austin skyline and treasured meals with my growing family around the table. I am so fortunate to have these diverse, rich, rewarding experiences that each nourish me in their own unique way.

Last spring, with deliberate intention, we chose to shake up this pattern, when we listed our Mary Street home for sale. We set our sites on the goal of greater fluidity between our lives in Texas and Europe. Since that intention was set we have ridden the unpredictable waves of transition, sometimes with grace and other times not so much. Our plan to establish an affordable home base in a community that respects its natural resources, within a reasonable distance for our children is well underway. The foundation of our San Marcos home has been poured, and all of the intricate decision making – from tiles to lighting – is happening now.

This new construction will become our Texas home for the months we're not in Europe, but with only a foundation visible important questions have arisen.

Where is home right now?

Where did the concept of home go when I turned in our Mary Street keys?

Have we been homeless all summer?

Throughout these past months I have been led down an unexpected path that has required me to reconsider the idea of "home" and brought up these questions.

What is my definition of home?

What makes a house a home?

Is home always a house?

In pondering these questions, I've come to a surprising

realization: perhaps the structure we call home is actually secondary to our feeling and experience. I can recall multiple times over my fifty plus years when all I yearned for was to go “home” and yet it wasn’t a particular building that fulfilled my longing. Often returning to the building known as “home” increased the longing. Have you ever had that experience yourself?

Could “home” be a feeling instead? A sense of belonging that comes from deep within? Possibly even more than belonging, perhaps home is related to a sense of purpose. Maybe the two even go hand in hand, when we have a purpose we feel we belong. Hmmm that is something we all might want to ponder.

When we have a purpose, we belong. This might provide an explanation for the fact that when I sit in the *hofgarten* of Joachim’s family surrounded by relatives I without doubt feel at “home”. It might also explain why I could refer to our mountain top *gite* in France, which never contained a single personal item of mine other than my clothing, as “home”. Both experiences evoke a sense of purpose and belonging in me, and the sensation feels very much like the “home” I longed for as a child.

This idea of purpose and belonging can be further put to test when I consider our final weeks on Mary Street. While I no doubt experienced the feeling of “home” for ten wonderful years on Mary Street, that feeling dramatically shifted once the staging began to put our house on the market. When my practice was dismantled and packed away and a good part of my kitchen put into storage I completely lost my sense of belonging and purpose in that house.

So this leads me to the present moment, my returning from a summer abroad to a furnished rental. Rather than walking into our Mary Street home, in which each every corner was familiar, I stumbled in my jet-lagged state into a space entirely unknown. Not only was this new structure void of our familiar

furnishings, but the original setup did not allow space for our individual interests. So we've spent this first weekend bringing in some essential items, as well as carving out space for us to gather as family and spaces for each of us as individuals. It's not a big house, so we're having to be creative!

We will have the perfect opportunity to test my new idea of home in the days just ahead. Will it feel like a home now that I've created my early morning space to meditate and write and a corner for my standing desk to teach and meet with clients online? Will it feel like home now that Joachim has a quiet spot (to work through his scary data problems only he could enjoy) with his guitars nearby for an occasional respite of jazz? And Sebastian. When he has his jewelry bench up and running and a place to complete this semester's homework undisturbed will he, too, feel at home? Time will tell. But it already feels as if we're off to a good start.

What does all of this talk of home bring up for you?

Have you considered your personal definition of home?

How has it changed over the years?

Do you relate to my proposal that our sense of home is connected to our sense of purpose and belonging?

I'd love to hear your thoughts as I, too, continue to consider this meaning of home.

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## Romanian Adventures

Exactly five years ago I landed in Romania for the first time in Bucharest and was quickly drawn down an entirely new and unexpected path. This first experience in Romania opened and expanded my mind in surprising ways. The information I gained led to my deeper understanding of how we can restore our

immunity with the right tools and lifestyle.

In 2013, it was my heart that spoke when I requested an opportunity to study with Dr. Sorina Soescu of Constanta, Romania. Dr. Soescu had made quite a name for herself across the country sharing her passion for natural healing using both Gemmotherapy and a diet of plant-based foods. She had published a series of books and ran a bustling family oriented practice. I knew if I wanted to learn more about these extracts she would be the one to teach me. Sitting in her practice day after day, observing her work and hearing the repetitive success stories shared first hand by mothers was life-changing for me. I knew I wanted to offer my clients not only this same level of success but also to empower them to make dietary choices that would support their health and wellbeing.

It was Sorina that led me to Plant Extrakt as a possible source for Gemmotherapy extracts, and within in a few months I was returning to Romania once again. This time I arrived in the university city of Cluj and after a morning-long meeting at Plant Extrakt the idea of a private label extract for my practice was born. But my travels to Romania did not end there as Joachim and I returned together in 2014 to Bucharest for my presentation at their national conference, and Sebastian joined us in Timisoara in 2015 when I presented once again.

With each visit, I not only learned more about Gemmotherapy but I also learned about Romania through my interactions and observations. Not surprisingly, I've come to appreciate the many simple heartwarming gestures of Romanian hospitality. I had the opportunity to observe in each city the remarkable juxtaposition of ancient and modern times – often viewed in a single glimpse. I have been impressed by the deep pride Romanians have of their history and culture and listened with deep interest to first-hand accounts of the revolution of the last century. And then there is the food... surprisingly I have enjoyed excellent meals in more vegan restaurants in Romania

than anywhere I've traveled!

This summer's trip offered a remarkable opportunity for me to team teach with my mentor, Dr. Soescu. Over the course of two days, we shared our passion for restoring immunity with diet and Gemmotherapy with over 60 participants who had traveled to Cluj from across Romania. In a stunning lecture room with floor to ceiling windows, we discussed natural healing with a backdrop of the terraced farmlands of the Center for Biodiversity. Built so it was integrated with the existing monastery ruins, the energy of the space was remarkable.

While the participants were primarily physicians, this enthusiastic group also included a Veterinarian from Hungary, an Integrative health coach and her husband both from Cluj, a few pharmacists and several others who came to learn for personal reasons due to health challenges.

For the most part, the room was filled with professional health practitioners and for that very reason I chose to turn the table and proposed that they must each be their own first patient and listen for themselves and their own health challenges this weekend. Going further with this concept, on the second morning, I invited them into my practice as if they had arrived for an intake session. With my prompting of questions, each participant completed a checklist on themselves. When teaching practitioners it is my desire to challenge them to learn through their own body first. In order to more deeply connect with the restorative process and be authentic in our work, we must fully experience the effects of dietary changes and extracts in our own lives.

This morning I sit with my hotel room windows wide open over the cathedral square listening to the harmonizing of church bells and orthodox chanting across the city. Only a few hours remain to take in the Cluj and today this view is preferable to a morning walk through the busy streets. I've enjoyed my plate of the best melon only August can deliver and a cup of

green tea. I savor these moments of solitude and stillness, appreciating them all the more knowing that the coming week will be a blur of activity as we embark on the long journey back to Texas by way of Germany. And so I will stay and just enjoy this moment and all it offers.

Ahead for me is a return to family in Germany. A few days filled with goodbyes until next summer, and then the adventure continues because it truly never ends. We will be returning to Austin on Friday to our furnished rental which we will call home for the coming months. As we began our *work from anywhere* experiment this summer the word *home* has taken on a new meaning. Be sure to check in with me next week when I'll be sharing some further thoughts on home that I believe will challenge you to consider your own definition.

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## Avocado Cashew Cream with Zucchini Spirals

Yes, it IS another zucchini recipe. But honestly, I just could not help myself after experiencing a bowl of this deliciousness at Samsara in Cluj this past weekend. We can blame my obsessive nature on the fact that I could not get this dish off my mind. But trust me – you need to try this! Creating your own zucchini spirals is a snap with a kitchen tool of your choice, or head over to Whole Foods for a package from Cece's Veggie Co. However you decide to make the spirals just do it soon!

### Sauce Ingredients

1 1/2 cups raw organic cashew pieces, soaked in warm water several hours or in cold water overnight and drained



1/2 to 1 cup water ( more may be needed to reach desired consistency)  
2 ripe avocados, pitted  
1/4 cup nutritional yeast  
1 tablespoon mellow white miso  
Juice from 1 lemon or lime  
A handful of fresh basil leaves  
Salt and Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
12 ripe cherry tomatoes

## **Spirals**

5 to 6 medium-size zucchini or summer squash, cut into spirals or peeled into strips

## **Directions**

Place all ingredients, except zucchini and salt & pepper in a blender and puree until smooth – start with 1/2 cup water, then add more to achieve desired consistency. Sauce should be creamy and thick, but pourable. Adjust seasonings as necessary.

## **To Serve**

Place zucchini spirals in bowl, top with avocado cream and sliced cherry tomatoes. Toss well before eating. You may wish to offer a vegan nut based parmesan on the side.