

Vegan Tortilla Soup

I will apologize right up front to my dear Hispanic readers for my straying from tradition with this recipe. And yet such is the life of the vegan, always in search of ways to capture the essence of traditional recipes. So please forgive me as I share this quick and tasty interpretation.

Ingredients

- 8 Yellow or Blue Corn tortillas cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ in. strips
- Olive or Avocado Oil
- 1/2 Onion, rough chopped
- 1 Shallot or two garlic cloves peeled and chopped
- 2 TBL tomato paste
- 1-2 Chile chipotle peppers in adobo (adjust according to desired heat)
- One can of diced tomatoes (fire-roasted if available)
- One cube of Veggie bouillon and water or 4 cups of prepared Veggie stock
- One cup of Fresh or Frozen Corn
- An 8-ounce package of mushrooms, sliced
- One sprig of fresh epazote or oregano
- Salt and Pepper to taste

For toppings

- 2 Avocados, cut in half, pitted, diced
- Fresh, chopped Cilantro
- Vegan sour cream (prepared or purchased)
- 1 Lime, cut into quarters

Directions

1. Brush tortilla strips with a light coating of Olive or Avocado oil. Place on a baking sheet in a preheated oven (350 degrees) and toast approx 15 minutes until crisp.

Set pan aside to cool.

2. In a dutch oven or heavy soup pan on medium heat, warm a splash or two of oil and saute mushrooms until nicely brown and cooked through. Remove and set aside.
3. Add a bit more oil to the pan and the onion, and saute until soft. Add shallot or garlic and cook for another few minutes. Add the Chipotle pepper and tomato paste, allowing it to thicken and caramelize for just a few minutes. Add a can of chopped tomatoes, one can of water, and the veggie bouillon cube. Process this mixture until smooth in a high-speed blender or using an immersion blender. Return soup to the pan, add mushrooms, corn, and a sprig of epazote. Adjust the seasoning and the soup consistency with more water if desired. Cover and allow to simmer for 15 mins.
4. Prepare toppings.
5. When ready to serve, distribute tortilla strips into bowls, ladle soup and add toppings.
6. Enjoy!

Avocado Tahini Spread

There's nothing like slow, simple meals that allow for some autonomous assembly. One of my favorites centers around a loaf or two of whole grain bread and a mix of spreads and toppings.

If that sounds appealing, you might want to consider adding this bright green beauty to your own collection.

Adapted from Salma Hage, *The Middle Eastern Vegetarian Cookbook*

Ingredients

- 2 large or 3 small ripe avocados
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh or frozen peas blanched and quickly cooled in an ice bath to preserve their color
- 2 heaping TBL of tahini
- Juice and zest from 1 large lemon
- 1 tsp of honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tea of toasted cumin seeds
- A handful of fresh mint leaves, a sprig reserved for garnish
- A handful of lightly toasted pine nuts

Combine all ingredients except pine nuts in a food processor and process until smooth. Serve in a small bowl topped with pine nuts and mint. Keeps well in an airtight container for several days.

Summer Curry

The secret to this curry is in steaming the vegetables just enough to be tender, and if you have not yet had steamed eggplant, you are in for a treat. You can use any form of a steamer. Mine is a simple insert from Ikea that fits into a larger stainless steel pot.

Ingredients

- One small onion, peeled, cut in half, and sliced thin
- 6 Fingerling potatoes, cut into one-inch pieces
- 1lb of green beans, topped and cut into segments
- Four baby bok choy quartered lengthwise

- Four Japanese eggplants, quartered
- Your favorite curry paste (mine is by Thai and True)
- One tablespoon of coconut oil (optional)
- One can of coconut milk or $\frac{1}{2}$ can of milk and $\frac{1}{2}$ can of water
- Salt to taste
- Fresh lime juice to taste (I use one small lime)

Directions

Heat a heavy skillet or dutch oven over medium heat, add coconut oil, and saute onions until softened and translucent. You can also dry saute if preferred. Add 1-3 TBL of curry paste, depending on the brand and desired heat. Stir well with onions and sit aside.

Steam potatoes until nearly fork tender, add green beans, and continue the process for another 5 minutes. Remove to a large bowl. Add more water if needed to the steamer and add eggplant. Cooking time will vary depending on the thickness of your eggplant, but it will become translucent and tender as it cooks, 10-20 minutes. You will want it to be soft yet still retain some shape. Remove eggplant and add to the bowl with the potatoes and green beans. Add bok choy, steaming for about 10 minutes. While it cooks, return the heavy skillet or dutch oven to medium heat, mixing in the coconut milk to curry paste. Add salt to taste and the cooked vegetables. Cook just enough to warm, and add the bok choy and fresh lime juice.

Serve your curry with prepared steamed rice.