

Baked Red Rice & Beans

When I returned to my kitchen after three weeks away, my deep desire for comfort food was in direct conflict with my lack of desire to grocery shop. I recalled bookmarking a pantry-friendly recipe in NYT prior to leaving that was a perfect match for the cold front moving into Texas. With a few adaptations, this simple dish hit the spot on so many levels, yummy, hands-off, and full of texture.

Here you go with a grateful nod to Mark Bittman for his inspiration

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 sweet pepper, stemmed, seeded, and chopped
- 1 fresh jalapeño or serrano, stemmed, seeded and minced
- 1 can coconut milk, refilled with water to use as needed
- 2 veggie bouillon cubes
- 1 teaspoon of Herbes de Provence
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- 2 cans of kidney or other red beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 cups red rice (Carmargue is possible), parboiled for 15 minutes, rinsed in cold water, and drained
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

Parboil rice and set aside.

In a large dutch oven on the stovetop, heat oil and saute onion and sweet pepper. When tender and fragrant, add jalapeño, coconut milk, bouillon cubes, herbs, and pepper flakes. Simmer for a few minutes, then add beans and rice. Add

salt and pepper to taste.

Level off all ingredients with a large spoon or spatula and add just enough water to cover the beans and rice. Turn up the heat to bring all ingredients to a boil and then place dutch oven in the heated oven. Cover with the lid for a steamed dish or leave the lid off and enjoy the crispy crust that forms.

Because this is Texas I served this dish with slices of fresh avocado and salsa.

Enjoy!

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.

Asian Inspired Greens

When I discover fresh greens in August in Texas, I honestly can't say no. That is exactly the reason that led to my having a bag of braising baby greens, a bunch of chard, and another bunch of spicy mustard, all needing to be cooked at once. I immediately knew that I would turn to Hetty McKinnon for inspiration, and below is my take on her Restaurant Greens from her gorgeous book, *To Asia With Love*.

Ingredients

Garlic/Shallot Oil (optional)

- 3 TBL of Olive Oil
- 2 Garlic cloves or one medium shallot, peeled and finely chopped

Sauce

- 4 TBL Tamari
- 1 TEA Maple Syrup
- 2-3 TBL of boiling water
- A few grinds of pepper (or, if you prefer a bit of heat, red pepper flakes)

Greens

- 2 bunches of any greens (chard, kale, mustard, gai lan, ong or bok choy), well washed and drained on a dish towel.
- Olive oil
- Sea Salt

Directions

1. If you would like to serve this with garlic/shallot sauce, prepare it by heating oil in a small pan. When hot, add garlic or shallot and leave on the heat just long enough for it to color slightly. This will be a matter of seconds. Remove from heat, and allow to cool.
2. In a jar with a lid, combine tamari, maple syrup, water, and pepper. Shake well and set aside.
3. Prepare greens by cutting the leaf lengthwise down the center and in half if they are long. Work through the bunches attempting to keep a similar length and shape.
4. Fill a large pan with water and bring to a boil; add a splash or two of oil. Working in batches, drop the pieces with thicker stems first, and then after a few seconds, add the more leafy pieces. Use a wooden spoon to submerge all of the greens and move them around for a few more seconds. This blanching process is quick, and the pieces are done as soon as they are wilted and brighten in color.
5. Gently remove with tongs, slotted spoon, or a similar tool and place in a colander. Drain very well. If serving, immediately arrange the greens on a platter, drizzling with the tamari blend and a spoonful of the garlic oil. Salt to taste.
6. You can also opt to put greens in an ice bath to retain their bright color and warm and serve later.
7. Serve alongside steamed rice or over rice noodles.

Vegan Eggplant Fideuà

Intrigued recently by this Ottolenghi Guardian Catalan recipe this fideuà is a remarkable blend of flavors and textures. Not familiar with the term, I learned that it was a bit of a cross between a risotto and paella and often features shrimp and fish. Admittedly the many steps involved are not for the impatient, but trust me, every moment you dedicate to bringing this to table will be richly rewarded.

Ingredients: The vegetables

- Olive oil
- 3 large red peppers (350g)
- 2 firm eggplants (600g)
- Fine sea salt and black pepper

Directions

1. Set a griddle pan on a high heat and ventilate your kitchen. As the pan heats, prepare the peppers and eggplants by rubbing a bit oil all over the skins. When the grill pan is hot, lay out as many the vegetables.
2. Keep a close watch and rotate as the skin blackens. This process takes up to 30 minutes and is complete when the vegetable is charred on all sides. Set them aside to cool completely.
3. Once the peppers and eggplant are cool enough to handle, peel off and discard the skins. Remove stems and seeds from the peppers. Tear the peppers and eggplant into strands. Lay out on a large plate, sprinkling with salt and set aside.

Ingredients: The pasta base

- 250g GF vermicelli or capellini pasta broken into roughly 3cm lengths
 - 0live oil
 - 2 onions, peeled and thinly sliced
 - 3 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced or 2 shallots peeled and sliced thin
 - 1 tbsp tomato paste
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp smoked paprika
 - 1 large plum tomato chopped fine
 - 500ml prepared vegetable broth
1. Place a heavy, 11-12 inch (28cm,) nonstick lided frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the vermicelli to toast. Keep a very close watch and stir frequently until most pieces are a deep golden shade. Tip pasta into a bowl and set aside.
 2. Return pan to the heat, add a splash of olive oil and saute the onions, stirring, until soft and lightly brown. Stir in the garlic or shallots, tomato paste and paprika, cook for another three minutes, until fragrant.

Combining

1. Add the pasta pieces, tomato pieces, broth, a teaspoon of salt and a good grind of pepper and combine well. Lay eggplant and pepper strands on top in small piles, leaving spaces to see the pasta below. Cover the pan, turn down the heat to medium, and leave to simmer for 10-12 minutes, until all the liquid has been absorbed.
2. To create a crisp base, remove the lid, turn down the heat to low and allow to cook undisturbed, for approximately 10-12 minutes. When done the pasta at the edge of the pan starts to curl inwards. It's a bit tricky to create a crisp crust and not burn, patience and low heat is the key.

3. Remove from heat and allow to sit and rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Ingredients: The Picada

Traditionally added during the last stage of cooking, here the picada is more of a topping.

- 1 slice stale GF bread
- 60ml olive oil
- 35g whole almonds
- 1 cascabel chili, stem and seeds removed, flesh roughly crushed
- 1 minced garlic clove or small shallot
- 15g (4 T) flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped
- 5g dill leaves, finely chopped

1. While the Fideuà cooks or during the rest period, prepare the picada topping.
2. Use as small frying pan on medium heat or a toaster to toast the bread until lightly colored.
3. Add the oil to the fry pan and when heated add almonds and fry for three to four minutes, until lightly golden. Stir in crushed cascabel chili and garlic set aside to cool.
4. When bread and almonds have cooled, place in a small processor and blitz until the consistency of bread crumbs, add herbs, blitz again. Add to a small bowl and stir a pinch or two of salt.

Serving

1 lemon, cut into 6 wedges

Spoon half the picada over the fideuà and serve straight from the pan with the lemon wedges with remaining picada alongside.

Herbed Pumpkin Seed Dressing

I've managed to keep a lovely herb garden alive this summer and absolutely delight in harvesting twice a week to make up a luscious dressing for salads. I eat a large raw salad daily, rotating ingredients with the season. You will find that this dressing is equally delicious on a raw broccoli salad, a cabbage slaw, or, as pictured above, with a mess of freshly picked salad greens.

Full disclosure: I never measure ingredients for my dressings but felt it would be kind to share a model to work with if a homemade dressing is a new territory. I've shared a few options so that you can make it your own.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of olive oil, or if you prefer oil-free, use a plant-based unsweetened milk
- 1/2 cup raw pumpkin or hemp seeds (the seeds will make it thick and creamy)
- One green scallion or peeled and chopped shallot
- 2-3 handfuls of fresh herbs, any combination such as basil, mint, parsley, cilantro, or dill
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar or citrus juice
- 2 TBL Nutritional Yeast
- A splash or two of maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon dijon mustard or 1 TBL of miso paste
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions

I prefer to mix this in my food processor, but a blender or immersion blender works equally well.

If using pumpkin seeds, blend them first, creating a fine powder to create a smoother dressing. Once you have achieved that then add all ingredients and process or blend until smooth, tasting, and adjusting to your preference. Store in the fridge for up to two weeks.

Vegan Eggplant Parmesan

What would eggplant season be without a vegan version of eggplant parm? In this version I cut out the breading and frying making it a healthier and simpler dish to prepare. And because it's now eggplant season in Texas expect to see a few more recipes that feature this summertime superstar.

Ingredients

- 3 medium-large eggplants, cut crosswise into 1/2-inch slices, to prevent bitterness use eggplants that have been recently picked.
- Olive oil
- 1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 shallots, peeled and sliced thin
- 1 ½ teaspoons fresh or dried oregano
- 1 28-ounce can or jar of chopped tomatoes
- 1-2 TBL of tomato paste
- 1 splash of maple syrup
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup (packed) fresh basil leaves
- ½ cup freshly grated Vegan Parmesan
- ⅓ cup fine gluten free bread crumbs
- Vegan Mozzarella (optional)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano or basil leaves for serving

Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Brush both sides of eggplant slices with oil, and place in a single layer on two or more baking sheets. Bake until undersides are golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes, then turn and bake until other sides are lightly browned. Set aside.

Reduce oven temperature to 375 degrees.

While eggplant cooks, heat a small amount of olive oil in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until soft, about 10 minutes. Add shallots and dried oregano cooking another few minutes.

Add tomatoes and their juices, cover, and simmer 15 to 20 minutes. Add tomato paste, maple syrup, basil and salt and pepper to taste.

Into a casserole or iron skillet as I used, spoon a small amount of tomato sauce, then add a thin scattering of parmegiano, then a single layer of eggplant. Repeat until all ingredients are used, ending with a little sauce and a sprinkling of parmegiano.

In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs and oregano with just enough olive oil to moisten. Sprinkle on top. Bake until eggplant mixture is bubbly and center is hot, 30 to 45 minutes depending on size of pan and thickness of layers. If you'd like, you can take it up a notch add a light layer of Myiko's liquid mozzarella or another mozzarella of choice. Allow another 5 mins in the oven and then set aside to rest at least 5 minutes before serving.

Enjoy!

Herbed Mushroom Pizza

Have you ever cooked a pizza in your cast iron skillet? The results are truly amazing and if you can manage to do this in a convection toaster you can enjoy fresh made pizza without a sweltering kitchen.

Here's a no-recipe walk thru to guide you through the assembly process.

Ingredients

Crust

I suggest you make up this gluten free pizza dough or use your own pizza dough. Set aside prepared dough while preparing the topping. An 8-9" cast iron skillet can accommodate 7 oz or 200 grams of dough.

Coarse ground cornmeal for dusting bottom of skillet.

Herbed Mushroom Topping

- 3 large shallots peeled and sliced into strips.
- A large head of mother of pearl oyster mushrooms, separate layers and slice lengthwise to create strips.
- Generous amounts of fresh or dried thyme, rosemary, and oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Olive Oil

Directions

1. In a heated skillet add 1-2 TBL of oil, add mushrooms being careful not to crowd. Set a plate that fits inside the skillet on top of the the mushrooms and press down several times to release water during the cooking process.

2. Remove the plate and continue pressing down with a spatula until they are tender. Flip and repeat. Mushrooms should be crispy on the exterior, moist inside and golden in color. Remove to a bowl, seasoning well with herbs, salt and pepper. Return pan to low heat and add shallots, stirring to not burn, cook until translucent. Add shallots to herbed mushrooms.
 3. Preheat oven with to 450 degrees with iron skillet or alternatively use a pizza stone.
 4. Roll dough to fit the skillet.
 5. Once oven is ready work quickly to keep pan hot. Sprinkle bottom of pan with cornmeal, slide in circle of dough and fill the center area with mushroom mixture.
 6. Bake for 15-20 mins depending on oven, crust will be golden brown.
 7. Consider adding your favorite vegan cheese the last minutes of baking or leaving it as is to enjoy the herbed flavor.
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All the Flavors Cabbage Salad

Spicy, sweet, salty, you name it, this salad has it all. So cool and refreshing, it's the perfect summer salad. This one was inspired by our soaring Texas temps and my day-long attempt not to wilt. Have some fun subbing in what you have on hand, but remember that the end goal is to keep it textured and crunchy.

Ingredients

Salad

- $\frac{1}{2}$ head of purple cabbage chopped
- 2 medium cucumbers cut into bite-sized chunks

- $\frac{1}{2}$ small red onion peeled and diced
- 1 jalapeno or your favorite pepper diced fine (remove the seeds to reduce the heat)
- 1 tart apple seeded and chopped
- A handful of toasted chopped nuts of choice
- 2- 3 TBL of toasted sesame seeds
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Dressing

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tahini (a pourable brand is a bit easier to work with)
- 4 to 6 tablespoons lime or lemon juice, to taste
- 1-2 TBL of rice vinegar
- 2-3 TBL maple syrup or honey, to taste
- Fresh herbs (your choice of dill, basil, parsley, cilantro)
- Filtered water to thin to desired consistency
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt

Directions

1. Place all salad ingredients in a large bowl and mix with tongs or your hands.
 2. Place all dressing ingredients in a small food processor or a glass jar and use an immersion blender, processing until smooth. Add dressing a bit at a time, careful not to drown the veggies.
 3. Chill well and enjoy!
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Buckwheat Crackers

Thought these might be a lovely snack for my sweetheart. He'll take them along on his cross Atlantic flight Monday, headed to Germany where he will be with his mom for a stretch post surgery. And of course I couldn't help but hold back a few to enjoy myself. Recipe adapted from Aran Goyoaga.

Makes 2 large sheets or 4 toaster oven sized baking sheets.

Ingredients

- 1 cup (120 g) light buckwheat flour
- 1/2 cup (50 g) almond flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup (225 g) hot water
- 1/4 cup (55 g) extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup (35 g) pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup (35 g) sesame seeds
- 2 teaspoons fennel seeds
- Flaky salt, for sprinkling
- Black pepper, for sprinkling

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the buckwheat and almond flour, salt, hot water, and olive oil until smooth. The batter, like heavy cream or very thin pancake batter, will be runny. Add more water if needed.
2. Cover the bowl and let the batter rest for 20 minutes.
3. Measure and mix seeds together in a small bowl.
4. Preheat oven to 300F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
5. The batter will have thickened slightly but will remain pourable and thin. Pour half of the batter on a baking sheet if using large sheets or one fourth if using the

smaller sheets.

6. Evenly spread the batter until it is paper thin and reaches the edges of the pan.
7. Sprinkle a portion of the seed blend across the top of the batter and gently press them down. Sprinkle a little bit of flaky salt and freshly ground black pepper over the top.
8. Bake for 15 minutes. Rotating the baking sheet and continue baking for another 15 minutes.
9. The cracker should be golden brown and dry.
10. Gently remove the cracker from the baking sheet, lifting the parchment paper's ends. Place the cracker directly on the oven rack and continue baking for another 5 to 10 minutes until it is completely dry on the bottom.
11. Repeat process for each sheet.
12. Cool completely on a rack. Break into large shards. Store the crackers in an air-tight container. They keep for several days.

Summer Corn Risotto

With four fresh-from-the-farm ears of corn in my fridge, I took the liberty of adapting Emily Weinstein's adaptation of Corn Risotto. If you can carve out 90 minutes of cooking time this risotto is worth every bit of effort. Emily suggests preparing a corn stock and I wouldn't pass that up. It was simple hands-off work and give this classic Italian dish a different spin.

Ingredients

Corn Stock

- 2 corn cobs (kernels removed and set aside for risotto)
- 1 onion, unpeeled, cut into quarters
- 1 carrot, cut into 1-inch pieces
- Dark green leaves from 1 leek (white and light green parts set aside for risotto)
- 1 veggie bouillon cube
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns or several turns of fresh ground pepper

Place all ingredients in a saucepan and cover completely with water. Cover pan, bring to a boil, and reduce to just a simmer for a minimum of 30 mins. The stock could be prepared in advance and reheated.

Risotto

- A minimum of 8 cups corn stock or prepared vegetable stock
- A pinch of saffron threads, covered with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of boiling water to bloom
- 1 T of olive oil
- 2 T of unsalted vegan butter
- white and light green parts of leek finely chopped
- 1 cup arborio rice, the better the quality the better the finished dish
- raw corn kernels from the two ears of corn
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the thick cream from a can of coconut milk (optional)
- Salt & black pepper to taste
- 1 cup grated vegan parmesan cheese or 2-3 T of nutritional yeast
- 2 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley

Directions

1. Heat oil in a heavy dutch oven or lidded saucepan and add diced leek. Keep heat low so as not to burn the leeks. Once they are softened add vegan butter and

- rice. Stir well until rice is coated and glistening.
2. Bring stock in its own saucepan to a low simmer and ladle into rice, stirring constantly, over low to medium heat until absorbed. This is a process you will continue until rice is al dente, there is still a bite to the center, and will take about 20 minutes.
 3. Add saffron water and corn kernels, stirring well. Remove from heat, cover, and allow to sit for 10 mins. Check the rice to see if it is now cooked through, add coconut cream if desired, and adjust the seasoning.
 4. Mix in or top each serving with the grated cheese and parsley.

Enjoy!