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Thanksgiving for Vegetarians



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Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays, because I love sitting around the dining table for hours enjoying conversation. When I was a girl, mealtime was mandatory, unless you had sports practice or other school related activities. It our time to connect as a family, talk about the day, share our experiences and of course eat! The trend these days is not as structured, but Thanksgiving affords this precious time to relax and dine for hours around a beautiful table of fall colors.

But... what is a vegetarian or vegan to do to stay in the food game on Thanksgiving Day? Well, what I've learned is to share. Yup, share, and so I do this by making some of my favorite meatless, organic and nutritious recipes, and these bringing dishes to be considered in the line-up, for sampling. Over the years I have won over some friends and family who actually look forward to my dishes, and so I thought I would share a few here.

Roasted Beet Puree Appetizer

Peel then cut 3 medium beets and cut into strips

Put in a roasting pan

Preheat oven to 350

Marinate beets with ½ cup organic cold pressed olive oil

Sea Salt to taste & crushed black pepper to taste

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

3/4 cup of fresh chopped oregano

Mix and coat thoroughly making sure mixture is moist

Add more oil if necessary

Cook in oven for about 20 minutes with tin foil and another 15 minutes without cover. Let stand to cool then puree in food processor. Serve with your favorite gluten-free crackers.

Broccoli & Cauliflower Wrap Appetizer

1 bunch of broccoli

12 grape tomatoes

1/2 head of cauliflower

2 stalks of celery

1 small onion

1/4 cup pecans

1/4 cup of pine nuts

Chop broccoli and cauliflower into florets, dice celery, finely chop the onion, halve the tomatoes, coarsely chop the pecans and place ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Squeeze the juice of one lemon over top. You can lightly sauté the ingredients or serve raw. Sprinkle with pine nuts. Place on lettuce leaf, roll and serve.

Sweet Potato Pie

Almond Pie Crust

1 1/2 cup almonds

1/3 cup pitted dates

4 Tbsp. almond or cashew butter (any nut butter will do except peanut butter)

1/2 to 3/4 cup sunflower seeds

1/2 cup fresh coconut

Cover almonds with distilled water and soak for a couple of hours (you can choose to soak overnight). Drain for use. Grate coconut (you can also use packaged unsweetened coconut) and grind sunflower seed into a meal. Place almonds in food processor or Vita Mix and blend until creamy; add to processor coconut, dates, and almond butter. Pour into a bowl and mix in seed meal a little at a time until a

doughy consistency is reached. Press into pie plate. You can refrigerate four hours to set, or you can use right away.

Filling

1 1/2 to 2 cups raw sweet potatoes

2 - 4 Tbsp. fresh lemon or orange juice (about 1 medium size lemon)

2 tsp. raw, unfiltered honey

1 tsp. cinnamon

1/2 cup coconut, unsweetened

1/2 cup organic raisins, soaked

1/2 cup of pitted dates

1 cup almonds (you can soak them)

1/2 tsp. ginger

1/4 tsp. nutmeg

In a Vita Mix or food processor combine the sweet potato, almonds, juice and honey. Mix until creamy and then add coconut, raisins and spices. If too thin, add more almonds. Pour mixture into piecrust. Sprinkle a little cinnamon on top. Cover and chill overnight.

For other fantastic options, try Tofurky. This Oregon-based company has been offering yummy, GMO free, plant based alternatives to meats, chicken, turkey, hot dogs and much more for over 35 years. They themselves refer to their products as "the friendliest food on the plate." I must agree, since I am a fan; I believe your taste buds will agree as well. Visit their website for fun stuff, cool recipes, and their story: www.tofurky.com.

As always, be good to your body and remember that 3,500 calories equals one pound, so think before you go for that second plate of food or piece of pie. I hope you will make this a special time to see the blessings in the meal that you share with family and friends while giving thanks to the Creator of all things for the food, friendship, fellowship and family.

Julia Chiappetta is the author of "Breast Cancer: The Notebook" (Gemini Media, 2006) and is also the owner of Julia Chiappetta Consulting. She lives in Cos Cob.