Vegetarian for Life

Festive delights

How to make the festive season just as enjoyable for vegetarians and vegans as for meat-eaters



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Vegetarian for Life

Introduction

Christmas is a busy time in the kitchen. But, with a little forward-planning, it needn't cause a lot of stress. On page 11 are some tips for catering for older vegetarians and vegans this Yuletide. They will really appreciate your efforts.

Overview

Follow these simple tips and plan ahead – including that all-important communication on individual preferences. Then it's easy to make Christmas a happy time for veggie residents or service-users. What's more rewarding than bringing pleasure to others in the season of giving?

Remember, it's possible that meat-eaters will like the vegetarian or vegan options, too, so do give them the choice – and make plenty! And of course, if you'd like to give everyone a real treat, why not try these new recipes from our in-house chefs?

We wish you all a very happy Christmas.

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SERVES 4
VEGAN

Carrot, ginger and orange soup

- Good glug of olive oil
- 4 small onions, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2–3 inch piece of fresh ginger, finely grated
- Zest and juice of 2 oranges
- 8 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 litre water with vegan stock or 4 tsp vegetable bouillon
- Couple of pinches of cayenne pepper or chilli powder (optional)
- Sea salt and pepper to taste

To serve

- Coconut yoghurt or vegan crème fraiche (optional)
- Chopped coriander leaves

1 In a saucepan, gently cook the onion in the olive oil until softened.
2 Add the garlic, ginger and orange zest. Cook for a minute or so and then add the carrots, stock, and cayenne pepper or chilli powder (if using).
3 Simmer until the carrots are tender.
4 Using a hand blender, blend the soup until smooth.
5 Add the orange juice and season with salt and pepper. Blend again briefly to mix.
6 Reheat gently. Serve with optional dollop of coconut yoghurt or crème fraiche, and a sprinkle of chopped coriander on top.



SERVES 4
VEGAN

Smokey aubergine soup

- 1 bulb garlic, left in skin
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Large aubergine, chopped into large chunks
- 2 medium white onions, peeled and quartered
- ½ cauliflower, broken into large pieces
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp dried parsley
- ½ tsp smoked salt or smoked paprika (optional but can add great taste)
- 75g mung dal (or use other lentils)
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- 1 tbsp tahini
- Juice from half a lemon

1 Preheat oven to 190°C/370°F/gas mark 5.
2 Place garlic in a large roasting dish and drizzle with half the oil. Roast for 20 minutes.
3 Add the aubergine, onion and cauliflower. Drizzle with the rest of the oil and continue to roast for 30–45 minutes. Half way through add the cumin and parsley.
4 Once cooked, remove from the oven and allow to cool. When cool enough to handle, remove soft garlic cloves from the bulb and set aside.
5 While the vegetables are roasting, cook the lentils in the vegetable stock. Timings may vary so check packet instructions.
6 When the lentils are cooked add contents from the roasting dish and blend until smooth. Add a little extra stock if required.
7 Add tahini and fresh lemon juice at the end for taste.

Christmas stuffed cauliflower

- 1 large cauliflower, leaves removed
- A good glug of olive oil
- 4 tbsp breadcrumbs
- Handful chopped nuts

For the cauliflower stuffing
- 250g Brussels sprouts, shredded
- 1 tbsp ground linseed
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves
- Handful of fresh sage leaves, chopped
- 1 tsp chopped rosemary
- 150g cooked pre-pack chestnuts, finely chopped
- Zest of 1–2 lemons
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon allspice

SERVES 2–4
VEGAN



1 Turn the cauliflower upside-down and cut out the stalk and core, leaving a hollow cavity. The florets should still be held together.
2 Bring a pan of salted water to the boil (large enough to hold the entire cauliflower). Completely submerge the cauliflower and cook for about 7 mins or until al dente. Remove carefully and set aside to dry.
3 Add the shredded Brussels sprouts to the pan and cook for a minute or so until softened. Squeeze out any excess liquid.
4 Mix the ground linseed with 2½ tbsp water and set aside for 5–10 minutes until gloopy. This is kind of like an egg.
5 Meanwhile, heat 2 tbsp oil in a frying pan. Add onion and a pinch of salt, and cook until softened. Stir in remaining stuffing ingredients, including sprouts, and cook for a minute or so more.
6 Remove from heat and season. Blend with 150ml water and the linseed egg and blitz to a thick purée (best to use an electric blender). Put the mixture into a piping bag.
7 Pipe the stuffing mixture into cauliflower, getting in as much of the purée as you can. Transfer to a lined or greased baking tray.
8 Heat oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6. Mix the breadcrumbs with chopped nuts and season. Drizzle olive oil all over the cauliflower, then pat on the breadcrumb chestnut mix.
9 Roast for 45 minutes or until golden brown and crispy on top.



SERVES 4 AS A MAIN, 6 AS A SIDE VEGAN

Festive gratin

- 1 full broccoli cut into medium florets
- 400g frozen Brussels sprouts, halved
- 2 sweetheart cabbages, quartered
- 1 x 400g tin butter beans
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 25g non-dairy margarine
- 25g plain flour
- 700ml non-dairy milk (make sure it's unsweetened)
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp non-dairy cream cheese
- 100g non-dairy cheese
- 3 tbsp yeast flakes
- 2 slices wholemeal bread for breadcrumbs
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp dried oregano

1 Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.
2 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add broccoli, sprouts and cabbage then cook for 5 minutes.
3 Drain and tip into a greased ovenproof dish along with the onion. (If using fresh Brussels sprouts these will need to be cooked for longer.)
4 In a large saucepan on a low heat, melt the margarine. Add the flour until it forms a dough.
5 Slowly add the milk and stir using a whisk. The sauce will thicken. After around 10 minutes add the rest of the sauce ingredients, apart from 1 tbsp yeast flakes. Whisk until smooth. Season to taste.
6 Pour over the broccoli, sprouts, cabbage and beans. Top with breadcrumbs, remaining yeast flakes, thyme and oregano. Bake for 30 minutes.

SERVES UP TO 8 VEGAN

Roasted cauliflower tart

There are a few different components to this recipe, but please don't be put off because it is not complicated.

For the roasted cauliflower
- 1 medium to large cauliflower, broken into florets
- 2 tbsp melted coconut oil
- 1 tsp sea salt
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp smoked sweet paprika

For the crust
- 50g walnuts
- 50g oats
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ tsp salt and black pepper to season
- 130g spelt flour
- 4 tbsp coconut oil
- 3 tbsp oat milk or other vegan milk of choice

For the filling
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 dsp ground turmeric
- 1 round tsp garam masala
- ½ tsp ground cardamom
- ½ lemon, juice and ½ tsp zest
- 60ml oat milk

For the garnish
- Zest of ½ a lemon
- 2 tbsp finely chopped parsley

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/390°F/gas mark 6. Line a roasting tray with parchment paper.
2 Pour the coconut oil over the cauliflower florets and sprinkle with the salt, coriander and paprika.
3 Mix and place on a roasting tray. Roast for 20–25 minutes, turning half way through roasting, until golden and starting to crisp. Remove from oven and set aside.
4 While roasting, make the crust. Lightly oil the bottom of a 23cm (9-inch) loose-bottomed tart tin.
5 Place walnuts, oats, baking powder, nutmeg and seasoning in a food processor. Blend until coarsely ground. Place in a bowl. Sift in the spelt flour and mix.
6 Using your hands, rub in the coconut oil until evenly distributed. Add the oat milk and mix. Add a little more oat milk if the mixture is too dry.
7 Press the pastry evenly into the tart base using your hands. Trim any extra from around the edges.



8 Prick with a fork. Reduce the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 and bake for 15–18 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside.

To make the filling:
1 Warm the coconut oil in a deep frying pan over a medium heat. Add onions and sauté for 5 minutes until browning. Add garlic and cook for 2 minutes.
2 Reduce heat. Add salt and continue cooking for 5 minutes to caramelise. Stir in the spices, remove from heat and transfer to a food processor.
3 Add about ½ the roasted cauliflower, and the lemon juice, zest and oat milk. Blend until smooth and creamy. Spread into the pre-baked tart base and arrange remaining cauliflower florets evenly on the top.
4 Bake for 35 minutes at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Check cooked and then remove from oven. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and grated lemon zest. Set aside for 5 minutes before serving.

DESSERTS

Angelic mince pies (pictured on front cover)

MAKES 12 MINCE PIES VEGAN, GLUTEN-FREE

For the filling
- 2 apples (200g)
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- 100g raisins
- 100g sultanas
- Juice of 2 oranges
- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 1½ tsp cinnamon
- 1½ tsp ground ginger

For the crust
- 375g ground almonds
- 5 tbsp coconut oil
- 4 tbsp water
- 20 dates

1 Core and chop the apples into small pieces. Place in a large saucepan.
2 Add the remaining filling ingredients and stir together.
3 Let the mince simmer and stew gently for about 30 minutes, until the apples are softened.
4 Place all the crust ingredients in a food processor. Process for a minute or so until everything has blended together. Sprinkle a gluten-free flour over work surface and roll the mix out so that it's about ½cm thick.
5 Heat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.
6 Grease some muffin tins with coconut oil and then mould the mix into the individual tins. Cut the remaining mixture into star shapes using a cutter. Place the tray of crusts in the oven for 8 minutes, until they start to turn golden brown. Remove and allow to cool.
7 Start assembling the pies. Put two heaped tsp of mince into each pie before placing a star over the middle of the mince. Bake the pies again for 8 minutes.
8 Allow to cool before scoffing.



SERVES 8 CAN BE VEGAN*

Beetroot chocolate brownies

- 350g raw beetroot (after peeling)
- 125g (*vegan) dark chocolate cut into pieces/chocolate chips
- 100g (*non-dairy) margarine
- 170g caster sugar
- 3 eggs/*egg replacer (such as No Egg)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 150g plain flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 25g cocoa powder

1 If using raw beetroot, peel and chop into chunks. Place in a microwave-safe dish with 3 tbsp water. Cover and cook for 12 minutes on full power or until soft. If using vacuum-packed beetroot then remove from packet and drain.
2 Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Line and grease a 20cm (8-inch) square cake tin.
3 In a large bowl add 100g dark chocolate and margarine. If using fresh beetroot, add to this mixture straight from the microwave when hot then blend until smooth. If using vacuum-packed beetroot, in 10 second bursts melt the chocolate and margarine in a microwave-safe bowl until soft. Add the beetroot and blend until smooth.
4 Place the sugar, eggs/No Egg, and vanilla into a large bowl. Whisk until fluffy then spoon into the beetroot mixture.
5 Sift in the flour, bicarb and cocoa powder and mix until smooth.
6 Pour into the prepared tin and sprinkle the remaining chocolate on top. Place in the centre of the preheated oven and bake for 30 minutes.
7 If the brownie is still too soft then cover with foil and continue to bake for a further 10 minutes. Because this is a brownie recipe it will be very moist and sticky.

The mixture keeps well wrapped in cling film and chilled in a fridge for up to a week in an airtight container. Serve with oat cream or ice cream.

Snickers pie

SERVES 12
VEGAN

A take on the classic chocolate bar, but this is completely vegan and contains only fruit sugars!

For the base
- Coconut oil for greasing
- 2 tbsp peanut butter (doesn't matter if it's smooth or crunchy)
- 2 tbsp desiccated coconut
- ½ cup/85g shelled peanuts
- 5 dried dates, stones removed
- ½ cup/75g raw cashews

For the middle
- 10 dried dates soaked in 100ml hot water until soft
- 3 large ripe avocados
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 2 tbsp maple syrup

For the caramel layer
- 10 dried dates
- 1 tin chilled full-fat coconut milk – using the solid coconut mass and small amounts of water

1 Grease a 20cm (8-inch) spring-form pan with coconut oil.
2 In a high-powered blender, blend all the base ingredients to a sticky dough. Tip into a prepared spring-form tin and press down to an even layer. Chill in the fridge.
3 For the middle, drain the dates. Using a high-powered blender or hand blender blend all ingredients until smooth. Taste the mixture because you may wish to add more cocoa or sugar. Scrape from the sides and pour onto the nut layer. Return to the fridge.
4 Next make the caramel layer. In a small saucepan add the dried dates, coconut solid and around 3 tbsp coconut water.
5 Over a low heat, warm the dates in the coconut milk for 5 minutes or until soft. Using a hand blender, blitz until smooth. Once cooled slightly, add to the chocolate later and return to the fridge.

This can be frozen for up to 6 months or chilled in a fridge for up to 4 days. Best served chilled; slices perfectly when it's been out of the freezer for an hour. Serve with a tangy fruit coulis or ice cream/vegan ice cream, and decorate with chopped dates and peanuts.





Festive tips: Improving vegetarian and vegan catering in care homes

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Christmas dinner for veg*ns is as easy and often cheaper than meat- and dairy- versions. Roasting vegetables in oil rather than fat can be healthier and be enjoyed by all. Many gravy granules and stuffing mixes are suitable for vegans – just check the packaging first.

MEAT AND DAIRY ALTERNATIVES

There are many different alternatives to meat and dairy on the market; from 'cheeze' boards through to Tofurky, salamis and sausages. Some veg*ns prefer not to eat mock meats and would prefer vegetables and pulse- or nut-based dishes instead, so always check with the diner first about what their preferences are.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

When cooking for a crowd, leaving out animal ingredients means that they can be enjoyed by all. Instead of coating side dishes in butter, why not use oils and vegetable spreads? Custard can be made using regular well-known egg-free and gluten-free ingredients such as Bird's Custard Powder and a dairy-free milk. Roasties cook well in regular vegetable oil, and you can jazz up stuffing using dried fruit and nuts instead of sausage meat.



We hope that these ideas have given you some inspiration. If you would like any help or advice in increasing the number of vegan and vegetarian options that you offer, please contact us or visit our website.

As well as producing publications such as this one, we can deliver bespoke training, delivered on host premises, and tailored to your needs. Training is currently provided free of charge to Vegetarian for Life's Premium Accredited Members.

If you are committed to business excellence and want your catering for vegetarians and vegans to be known as the best, then Premium Accredited Membership is the tier for you!

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