

Almost Vegan

Flavorful Recipes from Around the World



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Middle East

Mujadara

serves 3-4

This rice and lentil dish is a staple comfort food in North Africa and the Middle East.

1 cup brown lentils
1 cup long grain rice
2 onions, thinly sliced
¼ tsp black peppercorns
¼ tsp whole allspice
½ tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp ground cardamom
olive oil
4 cups water

Fry the rice in a little oil, until it starts to change color. Add the cardamom and two cups of water. Bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes, then remove from heat and let stand 20 minutes.

Fry the lentils in a little oil until they start to brown. Add the peppercorn, allspice and cumin. Pour in two cups of water and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the lentils have absorbed all the water.

Carmelise the onions in oil. Make sure they get really brown and soft.

Combine cooked rice and lentils. Top with carmelised onions.

Moroccan Carrot Salad

serves 3-4

Courtesy of a Unix geek, Torgo, this is nice and tangy with lemon juice.

6 to 8 medium carrots, peeled and then sliced in 1/4-inch rounds
1/4 teaspoon chili powder (cayenne, chipotle, ancho, or the like)
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon honey
juice of about a half a big lemon, or of a whole smaller one
1/3 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon of fresh dill, washed and chopped fine
Pinch of salt, maybe a pinch of pepper

Cook the carrots in a pot of boiling water until just tender — roughly six minutes. Drain.

In a largish bowl, combine the lemon juice, the cumin, the chili powder, and the honey. Mix well. Add the olive oil and whisk it together well. Add the dill and stir.

Add the warm carrots to the bowl and toss it all to coat the carrots well. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Hummus

serves 6-8

Another recipe from Torgo. Peeling the chickpeas is tedious as all getout, but it does make the dip smoother.

juice of two smallish lemons (adjust to taste, and depending on how juicy the lemons are)
6 tablespoons of tahini
4 tablespoons of olive oil
5 big cloves of garlic, chopped fine
salt to taste
pepper to taste
onion powder to taste
pinch of coriander powder (optional)
big pinch of cumin

Then:

2 16oz cans of garbanzo beans
parsley, or Italian parsley
a bit more olive oil

Drain one of the cans of garbanzos, discarding the juice. Drain the other, reserving the juice.

Peel the garbanzos (just pressing on each a bit until the skin slides off). It will take time to peel all the garbanzos. It's optional, but it makes for a smoother hummus. Incidentally, peeling seems much faster and easier if done underwater — i.e., if the beans are in a bowl under an inch or so of water.

Now, in a blender, combine everything in the above list, starting at the top, stopping at (but including) the cumin. Add one-third of the can's worth of the juice that you reserved. Blend very well.

Start adding the beans little by little, and keep blending, and increasing speeds until very smooth. If you want to make the mix less viscous, add more of the reserved juice. Adjust the seasoning as needed.

Cover with chopped parsley, and a thin layer of olive oil. The parsley is more or less optional, but the olive oil is necessary, to keep the hummus from discoloring. Possibly sprinkle with paprika or red chili flakes.

Serve at about room temperature, with warm pitas. Possible garnishes include olives, peperoncini, tomato wedges. Variations on this recipe consist of adding or substituting other spices. The garbanzos, tahini, lemon juice, and oil are the only really core ingredients, and note that their quantities are approximate.

Muhammara

serves 1-6

One of the most incredible dips/spreads in the world. Make it a few days ahead and let the flavors mellow – it improves with age.

2 large sweet red peppers
1 Tbsp water
2/3 c. walnuts
2/3 c toasted breadcrumbs
1/4 c olive oil
1.5 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
2 tsp pomegranate molasses
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp salt

Roast the peppers until charred all over. Peel, stem and seed them, then chop coarsely. Place everything in the food processor and process until smooth. Taste for salt. Rest at least a few hours and at most 7 days. Serve at room temperature.



Khadai Curry

serves 1-2

This is a very simple stir-fried curry. Each step builds on the next one, and can be set aside or varied along the way. I learned this at a cooking school in India.

Onion Paste

1 onion
2 cloves garlic
2" fresh ginger

Blend in processor with a bit of water. Keeps in fridge for a week. Can be used in all sorts of dishes.

Basic Curry Mix

2 Tbsp oil
1 onion, thinly sliced
5 black peppercorns
2 cloves
1 whole cardamom
2" cinnamon stick
½ tsp brown cumin seeds
1 Tbsp ground coriander
½ tsp turmeric
½ tsp chili powder
2 Tbsp onion paste (above)
¼ cup water
salt to taste

Heat oil in pan and add onion slices. When onions begin to brown, add the whole spices. When onions are caramelized, add the powdered spices, onion paste and ¼ cup of water. Simmer on low heat for 3-4 minutes until the mixture thickens; the oil will separate and float on top of the mixture. This is basic curry mix and can be used as a base for many curry dishes.

Curry

2 small tomatoes, crushed
2 small green peppers, in bite-sized pieces
1 small onion, quartered
100 gr tofu or cauliflower, in bite-sized pieces
dash garam masala

To the basic curry, add the crushed tomatoes and cook until the mixture thickens and the oil floats to the top. (This is a *basic tomato-based curry*). Add green peppers and onions (and cauliflower, if using it) and cook for two minutes. Add tofu and cook for one minute, mixing well.

Remove from heat and serve with a sprinkle of garam masala.

Veg Cutlets

serves 1-2

This is Indian potato pancake breakfast and snack food. It's on every street corner and they even serve it in the trains. Goes great with ketchup or chili sauce as a condiment.

Veg Cutlet Spice Mix

¼ tsp chili powder
¼ tsp turmeric
¼ tsp garam masala
¼ tsp dry mango powder
2 tsp aniseed

Mix together. Store in an airtight container.

2 medium potatoes – boiled and peeled
1/2 tsp veg cutlet spice mix
1 tsp fenugreek leaves or spinach
¼ cup mixed vegetables – carrot, cauliflower, peas, cabbage
2 tsp cornstarch
oil for frying

Mash potatoes. Add spices and vegetables. Salt to taste. Form into patties. Coat with cornstarch. Deep fry (or pan fry) until golden brown.

Biryani Rice

serves 2-3

This is a deliciously seasoned rice dish that goes well on its own or with curries. If you want to make it omnivore, add partially cooked lamb or chicken pieces.

1 Tbsp oil
1 small potato, peeled and quartered
4-5 pieces cauliflower
5 black peppercorns,
2" cinnamon stick
1 whole cardamom
½ tsp aniseed
½ tsp black cumin seed
1 tsp coriander powder
½ tsp turmeric
½ tsp chili powder
salt
1 cup raw basmati rice, soaked in water for 10 minutes & drained
water

Soak rice in water for ten minutes; drain & set aside. Heat oil in pot big enough to cook rice in. When oil is hot, add potatoes, cauliflower and whole spices. Fry for 5 minutes, then add powdered spices and 2 cups water. Bring water to a boil and add rice. Simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit 10-15 minutes.

Kashmiri Saffron Tea

makes 2-3 cups

This is an excellent winter tea said to strengthen your lungs.

2 cups water
2 whole cloves
2 black peppercorns
2" cinnamon stick
2 green cardamom pods
2 tsp sugar
10 saffron threads
½ tsp green Darjeeling tea leaves

Boil 2 cups of water. Crush whole spices and add to water. Cover and boil for 6 minutes. Add sugar. Make a paste with the saffron threads and a few drops of water. Add the saffron paste to the pot. Remove from heat and add tea. Cover and steep for 2-3 minutes. Strain before serving.

South Asia

Pad Thai

serves 4

This is a favorite of Tod's to make, though it's not vegan. You can leave out the shrimp and eggs, but the fish sauce is necessary.

½ package Thai rice noodles, medium thickness
200 g shrimp
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 medium eggs
4 tsp nampla (fish sauce)
2 Tbsp tamarind
2 Tbsp sugar
1 shallot, minced
½ tsp ground chili pepper
1 cup bean sprouts
2 scallions, sliced at an angle
1 block tofu, drained and cubed
2 Tbsp crushed peanuts
½ lime, juiced

Soak the noodles in warm water for 15 minutes; when soft, drain. Heat the wok on high with a bit of oil. Cook shrimp until barely pink, then remove from pan. Sear tofu; remove from pan. Add the garlic to the pan with more oil if needed. When the garlic browns, add the noodles and stir fry for 30 seconds. Push to one side and scramble the eggs in the oil. Mix eggs into noodles and add nampla, tamarind water, sugar, chili powder, and shallot. Mix well. Add bean sprouts, scallions, shrimp and tofu. Stir and allow to cook for 1 minute. Serve with a sprinkling of lime juice and crushed peanuts.

Gado Gado

The coconut milk makes this delightfully fattening but served with a platter of steamed vegetables, it feels like it evens out somehow.

8 fresh red chilies
1 tsp blacan (dried shrimp paste)
2 Tbsp oil
1 medium onion, minced
1 ½ cups coconut milk
½ cup peanuts, crushed or ½ cup crunchy peanut butter
1 tsp brown sugar
¼ cup tamarind water
+ vegetables for dipping

Pound the chilies and blacan together until finely ground. Heat oil in a saucepan and gently fry shallots until soft. Add pounded mixture and fry for 4-5 minutes. Slowly pour in coconut milk. Add remaining ingredients and cook for about 3 minutes or until the sauce thickens. Serve with steamed green beans, boiled waxy potato, steamed cabbage, cucumber, carrots and other vegetables you like.



Soy Milk White Sauce

serves 2

I was a bit dismayed when we stopped eating dairy - no more creamy sauces. I was intimidated and unenthusiastic about trying one with soy milk but Tod was driven to figure it out. Sure enough, it worked like a charm. Basically, you do the sauce as you would a regular cream sauce, but you can skip the roux – the soy milk thickens on its own.

2 cups soy milk. unsweetened
1 clove garlic
1 onion, minced
olive oil
pinch nutmeg
salt & pepper to taste

Saute the onions and garlic in olive oil. Add the soy milk and seasonings. Simmer until thickened. The sauces will thicken more upon cooling, so you may want to add a bit of water to adjust the consistency.

Tapenade

serves 4 or more

This is excellent on toast for breakfast or as a snack with crackers or vegetable sticks. Always popular at parties, too.

1 cup pitted black olives
1 Tbsp capers
2 garlic cloves
1 Tbsp lemon juice
¼ cup olive oil
Optional: herbs of your choice: basil, fresh chili peppers, oregano, thyme

Blend everything in a food processor. The consistency should be even and spreadable, but a little bit lumpy. Allow to sit for at least few hours before serving.

Focaccia

makes 16" round (8-12 servings)

A classic bread and very easy.

1 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups bread flour (strong flour)
2 tsp salt
1 Tbsp sugar
1 pkt instant yeast (11 g)
1 1/3 cup warm water (45C/110F)
2 Tbsp olive oil (plus some extra for oiling the top)
1 Tbsp rosemary, chopped
1 tsp black pepper
2 Tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated (optional)

Mix together the flours, salt, sugar and yeast. Stir in the warm water to activate the yeast. Add the olive oil and continue stirring to incorporate all of the flour.

Knead on a floured surface until the dough is smooth but still quite soft, maybe 4 or 5 minutes. Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, turning to coat the dough with oil. Allow to rise, covered with a cloth, for 30-45 minutes or until doubled.

Punch down the dough. On a large oiled baking sheet, flatten the dough into a large disc about 1 cm thick. Spread with about a half tablespoon of oil. Use a rounded spoon handle (or a large cooking chopstick) to dent the dough all over at 3 cm intervals. Sprinkle with rosemary, pepper and cheese.

Sit a shallow pan of hot water in a cold oven. Put the bread pan on a shelf above the water. Close the oven and allow to rise about 20 minutes, or until doubled. Turn the oven on to 190C/375F and bake for 20 minutes or until browned on top. Cool on a wire rack.

Perfect Pasta Dough

makes 4 servings

This recipe isn't vegan, but it works so much better with the eggs that I ignore them.

125 g all-purpose flour
165 g semolina flour
3 eggs
1 Tbsp olive oil
pinch salt

Combine the flours and form them into a mountain on your counter. Poke a deep well into the center. Crack the eggs into the well and add the oil. Use a fork to whisk the eggs and oil, slowly incorporating the flour into the mixture. When the mixture gets thick, abandon the fork and use your hands. Knead for ten minutes, then wrap tightly in plastic wrap and allow to rest for 30 minutes. (This is a just enough time to tidy the kitchen and get a sauce started!) To finish, roll out by hand or with a machine and cut into desired noodly shapes. Boil in salted water 2-8 minutes, depending on how thick the noodles are and how al dente you like them.