

Vegetarian Foodservice Column for FSD
 for February 1999- THE VEGETARIAN KITCHEN
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 Approx. Word Count: 1100

SIDE BAR

Veggie in a Minute: veggie menu items are easy to prepare and offer. The following items are vegan- easily converted to lacto-ovo with the addition of dairy or eggs.

Entrees-

Three bean Tamale pie: alternate 3 types of cooked beans with salsa, top with prepared cornbread mix, bake

Chili Sauté: add chopped bell peppers, onions and garlic to vegetarian chili and sauté quickly – serve over steamed brown or white rice or cornbread

Veggie Shepherd's pie-top vegetable stew (try a mixture of carrots, celery, onions and mushrooms) with prepared mashed potatoes, bake

Pasta Bake: toss cooked pasta with marinara sauce, chopped tomatoes and diced mushrooms, season with fresh basil and oregano, bake

Lentil Stew: combine cooked lentils with cooked, quartered new potatoes, sliced carrots, diced celery and chopped tomatoes, season with pepper and dill, allow to simmer, serve

Side Dishes-

Garlic Mashed Potatoes: from scratch, roast whole garlic heads, peel and mash with potatoes; for speed scratch, add granulated garlic to mashed potato mix

Herbed Potatoes: coat new potatoes with olive oil (use a spray to save time and cost), toss with dried herbs and bake until crisp

Refried Beans: mash cooked pinto beans with sautéed onions and bell peppers sauté to heat

O'Brien Potatoes: add diced peppers, chopped onions and cut corn with hash browns, bake or sauté

Rice Pilaf: sauté rice in a small amount of vegetable oil, steam in vegetable stock, garnish with cooked peas, carrots, mushrooms and slivered almonds

Grab-and-goes-

Very Veggie Pita Pizza: coat the inside of a pita with marinara sauce, stuff with sliced mushrooms, chopped tomatoes, onions and bell peppers, minced garlic and diced olives, heat in oven or microwave, serve hot.

Veggie size: serve veggie burger of your choice with vegetarian chili and chopped veggies, serve on whole-grain bun or in a pita

Burrito wrap: fill a large tortilla or wrap with vegetarian refried beans, sliced chilies, chopped tomatoes or salsa, sliced onions and avocado slices, heat in oven or microwave, serve hot

Grilled vegetable brochette: skewer cherry tomatoes, whole mushrooms, chunks of bell pepper, zucchini, eggplant and tomatoes, marinate in teriyaki or soy sauce for several hours. Grill until veggies are lightly brown- serve hot or cold.

Desserts-

Couscous with berries: toss cooked couscous with thawed, frozen berries and chopped fresh mint- serve alone or with sorbet

Peach Cobbler: top frozen or canned pie filling with strips of piecrust, chopped nuts and raisins and bake

Baked Apple: stuffed cored apples with chopped dried fruit, cinnamon, ginger and orange zest, sweeten with orange juice concentrate and bake

Apple Bread Pudding: combine shredded croissants, sweet rolls and bread with apple pie filling (use applesauce for additional moisture) and bake

Fruit Compote: stew dried fruit (raisins, apricots, prunes, apples work well) with peeled, sliced apples and pears, season with cinnamon, mace and lemon zest. Serve hot or chilled, alone or over sorbet.

ARTICLE

Vegetarian cuisine is becoming more and more popular, as vegetarians grow at the rate of a million per year. Making your kitchen and menu veggie-friendly includes creativity and a veggie mindset- no new equipment or expensive ingredients are required.

Who wants what: Before adding menu items, ascertain what your customers' needs are. Some customers may be cutting back on meat and dairy for health reasons, some may be lacto-ovo vegetarians (eating eggs and dairy, but no meat or fish) and some may be strict vegans (excluding animal products, honey and sugar). After assessing your needs, educate your staff. Include both staff and customers in mini-taste panels, product samplings and cooking demos.

Secrets of the Storeroom: Review your inventory and identify vegetarian ingredients. Here are some suggestions of items to have on hand (you'll be surprised at how veggie you already are):

Freezer: frozen vegetables and fruit, frozen potatoes, frozen pie crust (made with vegetable shortening), fruit juice concentrates (to be used as a cooking sweetener in place of sugar).

Refrigerator: fresh produce, fresh herbs, fresh garlic and ginger, fresh potatoes, tortillas (made with vegetable oil), assorted breads, margarine, prepared salsas, chutneys, oil-based salad dressings (made without dairy or eggs) juices.

Nonperishable storage: canned tomato products, canned and dried beans (lentils, pinto, kidney, navy, garbanzos, black-eyed peas, split peas, white, lima, etc.), pasta, rice, potato mixes (made without dairy), grains (couscous, kasha, oats, bulgur, etc.), peanut butter, fruit preserves vinegars, mustard, oils, dried herbs and spices, flavoring extracts and zests.

Inspect the labels if you are using processed products, such as bakery mixes, frozen entrees, prepared salad dressings, etc. Some animal-derived ingredients are obvious (powdered egg, dried milk, bacon bits) and some are less obvious (fructose, sucrose, lactose, casein, rennet or enzymes used in the production of cheese and whey).

Speed or Scratch: Preparation of vegetarian menu items can be made- from - scratch or speed –scratch. If your kitchen and staff have the time and capacity, beans, veggie burgers and pasta dishes can be made from scratch (these items stand up well to cook-chill). If time and skill are lacking, utilize speed-scratch ingredients, such as canned beans, frozen or chilled veggie burgers and frozen pasta entrees. Add your own touches to create signature dishes. See the side bar for fast vegetarian menu ideas.

Vegetarian ingredients are versatile, easily adaptable to different dishes. Canned or “scratch” lentils can be mashed with stewed eggplant, fresh tomatoes, onions and garlic and used as a dip for vegetables, a spread for garlic bread or as a sandwich condiment. Tomato salsa can be a salad dressing, chip or vegetable dip, flavoring for soup and an ingredient in casseroles. Orange or apple juice concentrate can flavor a salad

dressing or marinade, replace sugar in baking recipes or add “zip” to a sweet and sour sauce (served over grilled vegetables). Many vegans avoid refined white sugar because it is processed with bone char, an animal byproduct. Cooked black bean beans can be tossed in salads, simmered in soups, baked into breads, smashed into spreads or can stand on their own, garnished with sliced red onion and avocado.

Think efficiency: Develop timesaving production techniques for preparing vegetarian and non-vegetarian menu items. For example, preparing steamed vegetables with margarine or olive oil, rather than butter, or using vegetable stock or base, rather than meat stock, means making only one batch for everyone. Purchase vegetarian canned refried beans (the price is the same) and use shredded cheese, meat or eggs as an optional garnish rather than incorporating into soups or casseroles.