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Weeknight Kitchen

April 4, 2012

Dear Friends,

This week's recipes, while vegetarian, will please carnivores as well. Katie Workman, author of *The Mom 100 Cookbook*, calls her Mexican Tortilla Casserole, "...one of those lifesaving blueprint recipes you can go to on rushed weekday evenings." We think it's just good, comforting food made from simple ingredients, many of which are pantry staples. The subtitle of Katie's book -- 100 Recipes Every Mom Needs in Her Back Pocket -- says it all. These are family-friendly dishes with lots of variations designed for weeknight suppers.

While the second featured recipe -- Veggie Burgers from *The Homemade Pantry* by Alana Chernila -- is a bit longer than our usual ones, we included it because these burgers are so darned good, the recipe makes a lot, and they freeze well. On those nights we come home too tired to think, we like knowing we can pull a few from the freezer and heat them up while we toss a salad. They're like money in the bank.

Have a good week,

Lynne



Mexican Tortilla Casserole

From *The Mom 100 Cookbook: 100 Recipes Every Mom Needs in Her Back Pocket* by Katie Workman (Workman Publishing, 2012). Copyright © 2012 by Katie Workman. Photographs by Todd Coleman. All rights reserved. Used with permission of the publisher.

Serves 4 to 6

Essentially a lasagna with tortillas standing in for noodles, this is one of those dishes that can miraculously be on the table in short order, made from things you most likely have in your pantry and fridge. If you don't like, or you don't have, one of the ingredients, skip it. Or, if you have something else that you think might be appealing all layered in (like slivered bell peppers to sauté with the onions, kale, chopped, cooked broccoli -- whatever the people in your home will eat), then fling it on in.

Nonstick cooking spray

1 tablespoon olive, vegetable, or canola oil

1 onion, chopped

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1-1/2 teaspoons chili powder

1 teaspoon minced garlic

1 can (14 ounces) chopped tomatoes, drained, with 1/3 cup juice reserved

1/4 cup tomato paste

2 cans (15.5 ounces each) white, black, or kidney beans (or a mixture of any two), rinsed and drained

Chopped fresh cilantro (optional), for garnish

Sour cream (optional), for serving

Salsa (optional), for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Spray a 9-inch round cake pan, springform pan, or baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, cumin, chili powder, and garlic and cook until you can smell the onion and the onion is softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes with the 1/3 cup of reserved juice and the tomato paste, then stir in the beans. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Let the bean mixture simmer until everything is hot, about 3 minutes. Add the corn, spinach and stir until the spinach has wilted and everything is well blended and hot, about 3 minutes. Taste for seasoning, adding salt and/or pepper as necessary.
3. Place 1 tortilla in the prepared cake pan. Spread one fourth of the bean and vegetable mixture evenly over the tortilla, then spread 1/4 cup of the shredded cheese evenly over the top. Repeat with 3 more layers, ending with the last quarter of the bean mixture and the last 1/2 cup of shredded cheese.
4. Bake the tortilla casserole until it is hot throughout and the top is lightly browned, about 20 minutes. Let the casserole sit for 5 minutes, then cut it into wedges using a sharp knife and serve it with a spatula or better yet a pie server. Sprinkle the top with cilantro as desired, and serve with sour cream and/or salsa on the side, if you like.

Cooking Tip: You can make the tortilla casserole a day ahead of time, cover it with plastic wrap or aluminum foil, and put it in the oven overnight; just take it out and let it sit at room temperature for about 20 minutes while the oven preheats to 400°F. Bake the casserole uncovered. You can also reheat the cooked casserole at 350°F for 15 to 20 minutes, until warm.

What the Kids Can Do: They can layer the tortillas, bean mixture, and cheese. Encourage them to distribute the filling evenly across the tortilla and portion everything equally over all four layers.

Veggie Burgers

From [*The Homemade Pantry: 101 Foods You Can Stop Buying and Start Making*](#) by Alana Chernila (Clarkson Potter, 2012). Copyright © 2012 by Alana Chernila. Photographs copyright © 2012 by Jennifer May. All rights reserved. Used with permission of Clarkson Potter/Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.

Makes 18 to 20 5-inch patties

Gould farm in Monterey, Massachusetts, is a farm like many others in some respects -- there are acres of organic gardens along both sides of the narrow road and cows that greet you with their kind stares. Up the hill there are pigs and chickens, and there is a dairy where Cheddar is cultured and aged before traveling to stores all over this part of the state. Poke your head into any door or walk through the garden beds and you will find staff and volunteers hard at work.

C. J. Walton came to Gould Farm as a volunteer in his early twenties. After a time at the Culinary Institute of America, he returned to the farm to develop his bread and pastry skills. He and the Harvest Barn team make bread, bagels, pastries, desserts, and yogurt for the people who live and work at the Farm and the visitors who come to the café at the barn. I always end up talking to C. J. during my visits, whether it's his latest discovery on how to make ice cream more shelf stable or what new flour has improved the pizza crust; we get into talking and the girls always have to pull me out of there. C. J. also takes on the challenges of re-creating store-bought foods, and on Saturday I went into the café to buy croissants and I walked out with this recipe. If you are a veggie burger lover, try this one, and you'll never need another box of veggie burgers again. This comes together quickly, so have all of your ingredients chopped and ready to go.

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra for the baking sheet

1 medium onion, diced

6 garlic cloves, minced

2 medium carrots, shredded

1 red bell pepper, diced

10 large mushrooms, stems removed, caps diced

1/2 cup corn (fresh or frozen)

2 cups cooked short-grain brown rice (from 1 cup dry)

2 cups breadcrumbs, homemade or store-bought

2 large eggs, beaten

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (see note below)

Optional: One 5-ounce can sliced water chestnuts, drained and roughly chopped

1. Heat the oil over medium heat in a large saucepan. Add the onion and cook until soft and shiny, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic, red pepper, and mushrooms and cook, stirring often, until soft and aromatic, about 10 minutes. Add the corn, cumin, oregano, chili powder, salt, and pepper. Continue to cook for 3 minutes more. Remove from heat and allow the mixture to cool slightly.

2. Preheat the oven to 425°F. In a large mixing bowl, combine 2 cups of the beans, 1 cup of the rice, and half of the cooked vegetable mixture. Mash with a potato masher until the ingredients are well blended. Use your hands to combine this mixture with the remaining beans, eggs, mustard, vinegar, soy sauce, yeast, and remaining 2 cups beans, remaining 1 cup rice, and cooked vegetables. Add the water if using. Let the mixture cool entirely.

3. Oil a baking sheet with olive oil. Using your hands, form the mixture into well-packed patties, about 4 inches in diameter. Lay the patties on the oiled baking sheet, and flatten with a spatula. Bake for 15 minutes, flip the patties, flatten with the spatula once again, and bake for another 15 minutes. Serve immediately, or if storing for later, allow to cool, then freeze on a baking sheet for at least 3 hours before transferring to freezer bags.

Storage- Freezer: Freezer-safe container or bag, 4 months (microwave for 1 minute and then grill, or fry the frozen patties on low heat in a covered, oiled frying pan for 10 minutes on each side). Fridge: (After defrosting) covered container, 4 days.

Nutritional Yeast: Nutritional yeast is a flaky, yellow, inactive yeast found at any health food or gourmet store, often in the bulk department. It is packed with vitamin B12, high in protein, and has a wonderful cheesy flavor that makes it an addictive and satisfying addition to popcorn.

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