



Cooking Seasonally & From The Pantry:
How to make the most of fresh produce year-round & a well-stocked pantry
Portland Mennonite Church, November 17, 2018

Menu:

Red Curry with Winter Squash
Grated Carrot Salad with Toasted Seeds and Herbs
Cabbage and Sweet Pepper Slaw with Yogurt Dressing
Roasted Winter Squash with Salsa Verde (Italian Parsley Sauce)

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Red Curry with Winter Squash

This is a quick, not terribly authentic red curry but very tasty and suitable to a variety of vegetables—use what you have. You can add chicken or tofu to it for a heartier dish though it's wonderfully rich and satisfying without as well. You can add rutabaga, turnips or potatoes to this dish as well.

Depending on what kind of squash you have, you may want to roast it first for about 20 minutes at 400 degrees (if it's an acorn type or another one that is difficult to peel raw) then cut it into bite-sized pieces and peel or don't peel if it's a kabocha or other thin skinned variety. Taste before you do and save yourself the time and nutrients if it's tender.

Serves 4, generously

2 leeks, washed and sliced in half lengthwise and then crosswise into half rounds
1 carrot, sliced into ½ -inch rounds (optional)
2 cups diced winter squash (any kind, either raw or cooked/roasted, see headnote)
1 1/2-inch piece ginger, peeled and minced
2 cloves of garlic, minced
2 heaping teaspoons (or to taste) red curry paste (available in most grocery stores)
1 can coconut milk (full fat preferably)
3/4 water
2-3 makrut lime lives (optional—they freeze well so if you find them buy a bunch and freeze)

1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons fish sauce (can omit to make it vegetarian/vegan)
Juice of half a lime (optional)
White or brown cooked rice

Heat large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add ½ cup of coconut milk (use the thickest, part usually at the top of the can) and the curry paste and bring to a boil. Stir occasionally and fry for 2-3 minutes. The fat will start to separate out in to a thin translucent film, which is what you're after. Add the garlic and ginger and continue cooking for about 2-3 minutes until it's fragrant. Then add the remainder of the coconut milk plus the water, lime leaves, if using, and the salt and the vegetables. Bring to a boil and then turn down to a simmer and cook for about 10-15 minutes until all the vegetables are tender. If you're using previously roasted or cooked winter squash add it at the very end just long enough to heat through. Add the soy and fish sauce and finish with a generous squeeze of lime juice, if using. Serve hot over rice.

Cabbage and Sweet Pepper Slaw

This is my go-to, quick slaw to use with any kind of cabbage, even Napa, even though it's a bit softer. You don't need to let it rest as long if you use Napa cabbage. I vary the ingredients based on the season and how hearty you want it to be, adding chicken, toasted seeds. Thinly sliced sweet peppers are a nice addition and you can swap parsley for cilantro and add sweet onions instead of green onions, etc. Quantities are approximations so feel free to use what you have.

The dressing is delicious and good on most anything—a bowl of rice/quinoa and beans with herbs, on roasted vegetables, on a burger, in fish tacos. . . so double the recipe for the dressing and have it on hand to enliven other things.

Serves 4-6

½ a small to medium cabbage (about 6 cups sliced), cut as thinly as possible
2 medium carrots (optional), grated on the large holes of a box grater or in the food processor
2 sweet red or yellow peppers, cored and thinly sliced
2-3 green onions or small piece of regular onion, thinly sliced
1 cup fresh herbs such as parsley, cilantro or mint
1/2 cup toasted sunflower or pumpkin seeds (optional)

Dressing

Juice of 1 lime or 1 1/2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, more to taste
2 teaspoons Dijon-style mustard
1 large clove garlic, minced and mashed
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/3 cup plain whole milk yogurt
1-2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon ground cumin
Several pinches red pepper flakes or a small hot pepper like Serrano or Jalapeño, minced (or more if you like heat)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Put the cabbage in a large bowl. Add scallions and cilantro and/or mint and carrot, if using. Mix all dressing ingredients together in a small bowl and pour about 2/3 of the dressing over vegetables. Mix well. Add more as desired. Reserve the rest for another use (see headnote). Let rest for 15 minutes to soften vegetables and let flavors meld. Toss in sunflower or pumpkin seeds, if using, taste and adjust seasoning and serve.

Lemony Grated Carrot and Seed Salad

I make a variety of carrot salads. They add bright and fresh flavors year-round. Carrot salads are the perfect foil for the cook-with-what-you-have approach. Cumin, coriander, chili flakes, serrano chilies, lemon, lime (juice and zest), rice vinegar, parsley, mint, cilantro, tarragon, and basil are all wonderful complements to the carrots. Toasted nuts and seeds of many kinds are good too.

You can add cooked white beans to this salad for a more robust version. Make a little extra dressing and you have a great lunch or light supper.

With a simple frittata and a piece of good bread, this makes a lovely dinner.

Serves 6-8 as a side

1 cup sunflower seeds (or pumpkin seeds) (this may seem like a lot but use it all if you can—it really makes the dish)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 generous pinches of sea salt
6 medium carrots, grated
2-3 tablespoons finely chopped chives or 1/3 cup chopped parsley or any other leafy green herb (see headnote)

Dressing:

3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon sugar or honey if your carrots aren't very sweet
1 teaspoon sea salt, to taste
3 tablespoons olive oil

Preheat oven to 300.

Toss the sunflower seeds with a teaspoon or two of oil and several pinches of salt and roast on a baking sheet for about 10 minutes, until they are crisp and golden. Set aside to cool.

Place the grated carrots in a serving bowl and add the herbs and toasted seeds. Add the dressing ingredients, toss well and taste and adjust seasoning with more lemon and/or salt, to taste.

Roasted Winter Squash with Salsa Verde (Italians Parsley Sauce)

You can use any squash you have and make plenty while you're at it. Both the roasted squash and salsa verde keep well for a few days and it makes a great snack.

Squash prep:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees

Roast however much squash you'd like. For squash with thicker skin you can cut it in half, scrape out the seeds and then cut in large wedges and roast as is and peel the wedges after they've softened in the oven. Or for delicata and kabocha type squashes where the skin is tender when cooked you don't need to peel it at all. Butternut squash is fairly easy to peel and you can do so raw, before roasting if you'd like.

Toss the raw squash chunks or wedges in a bit of olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Spread in a single layer on a sheet pan and roast, turning once to ensure even cooking, until tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. Time will depend on variety and size of your pieces.

Salsa Verde (Italian Parsley Sauce)

You don't need to use a food processor and sometimes I prefer the slightly rougher texture of it when all is chopped by hand but I often use the processor.

1 medium bunch parsley, well washed and stems removed (but don't bother picking all the leaves off the remaining stems)
Grated zest of 1/2 lemon (optional)
1 tablespoon minced shallot or onion (optional)
2 tablespoons capers, rinsed (optional) and chopped up a bit
2 small garlic cloves, minced
½ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, to taste
Salt, to taste

Either finely chop everything and zest the lemon (if using) and mix well or combine all the ingredients except the oil in the food processor and pulse until fairly uniformly and finely chopped. You don't want to end up with a puree so don't overdo it. Drizzle in the olive oil and pulse a couple more times. Taste and adjust with salt, lemon juice or vinegar if needed.

Basic Dry Bean Soaking/Cooking Instructions

If you aren't in the habit of soaking and cooking dry beans here are the basic steps. The flavor of the beans is very good this way and they are much, much cheaper than canned. Once in the habit, it's not much work at all. And I always soak and cook more than I need for any given recipe and freeze the rest in some of the cooking liquid.

The two keys to success with cooking beans at home are:

- 1) don't cook them (after they've been soaked) when you need them right away. Cook them when you're at the stove anyway making something else. The flavor and texture of the beans vastly improves if you let them cool and sit in their cooking liquid for an hour or more.
- 2) Cook way more than you need for one meal. Freeze or refrigerate the rest and have them on hand for quick, nutritious meals at any time.

4 cups dried beans (garbanzo, white, black, pinto. . .) Rinse beans if they look dusty and pick out any stones. Usually I don't find anything like that. Place in a large bowl covered by about 4 inches of cold water. Soak for 6-8 hours. Drain and rinse beans.

Place soaked beans in a large pot and cover with cold water by several inches. If you have time, add a few whole, peeled garlic cloves, a bay leaf or piece of kombu (seaweed) and a chunk of peeled onion. Bring to a boil, turn down to a simmer and let cook covered until the beans are tender, stirring occasionally (this helps prevent some beans from softening before others.) I've had good luck salting at the beginning of the cooking process but know that sometimes it can prevent beans from cooking properly, so salt mid-way through or at the end if you'd like. When you do add salt, be generous, as in at least 3 teaspoons salt to start if you're cooking 4 cups or so of dried beans. They'll probably need more still. The time it takes for the beans to cook will vary depending on the kind of bean and the freshness of the dried beans. Garbanzos take the longest, usually about 35-45 minutes. Black, white and pinto can be done in 20-30 minutes. Let beans cool in their liquid and then use, freeze, etc. If you're freezing some, fill your container with the beans and then ladle in the cooking liquid until the beans are almost covered. Cooked beans also keep in the fridge for 5-6 days.

Suggestions for using home-cooked beans:

- Use in a quesadilla with some cheese, herbs, green onions, & hot sauce or salsa
- Mix cold with salad greens, cheeses and/or hardboiled egg, nuts, herbs and flavorful dressing for hearty salad
- Refry with onion, garlic, cumin, hot pepper in a couple of tablespoons of olive oil or lard (if black, pinto or kidney)
- Make a fresh salsa/salad with black or pinto beans, diced tomato, minced Serrano chili, diced sweet onion, cumin and fresh cilantro and lime juice
- Make a soup/minestrone with any vegetables you have on hand, maybe some sliced sausage or chopped bacon, and finished with fresh herbs.

Stocking Your Pantry

What to stock is really a matter of taste. The pantry list included in this packet reflects my taste and is pretty basic.

The four main areas to consider are:

- Fresh (vegetables, fresh herbs, and fruit; dairy products; and other perishables)
- Dry (dry beans, pulses, seeds, nuts, grains, pastas, etc.)
- Seasonings (oils, vinegars, spices, herbs, spice pastes or sauces, etc.)
- Frozen (pre-cooked beans; grains, meats, fish, butter, etc.)

There is a fifth category which includes all my canned and frozen goods I preserve throughout the year when I have excess—frozen, roasted tomatoes and chilies; apple sauce; other fruit compotes; jams; pickles; kimchi, etc. This may or may not be a big part of your cooking but is something to consider adding over time if you're interested.

You will want to adapt the below pantry list to your tastes, dietary needs, etc. I've bolded the ones I think of as essential, but again this will vary from household to household. It will evolve as you try new recipes; cook beans at home, and just generally cook with lots of fresh, unprocessed ingredients. For example if you start cooking more curries or other Asian dishes you'll probably beef up your spices and oils and vinegars to suit those tastes.

The goal is to have your pantry be the foundation for your daily cooking. This can save money, time, and foster creativity. As you'll see in the pantry chart, most of the things I include are not very perishable. Even the items in the fridge, with the exception of milk all last quite a while. So

that leaves you with the regular task of buying fresh vegetables, herbs and possibly meat or fish. And of course some of those things you'll have stocked in the freezer as well.

Pantry List

Fridge

Eggs

Butter

Milk

Yogurt (wole milk plain)

Cheese (sharp cheddar, Parmesan or another aged cheese)

Onions

Garlic

Carrots

Bread

Whole-wheat and corn tortillas

Mustard (Dijon)

Tahini/peanut butter/almond butter

Fresh parsley, cilantro, etc.

Mayonnaise

Green/red curry paste

Hot sauce

Freezer

Cooked Beans

Cooked Grains (Barley, Rice, etc.)

Bacon

Sausages (pork, spicy, mild, etc.)

Whole or pieced chicken

Bread/bread crumbs

Chicken stock

Veg stock

Extra butter

Spices, whole

Sea salt

Black pepper

Nutmeg

Cumin

Coriander

Dried red chilies

Mustard seeds

Spices, ground

Cumin

Coriander

Cinnamon

Ginger

Chili powder

Cayenne

Red pepper flakes

Herbs, dried

Oregano

Thyme

Bay leaves

Oils/Vinegars/Sauces

Olive oil, better quality for raw use

Olive oil, cheaper for sautéing, etc.

Coconut oil, or other veg or seed oil

Toasted sesame oil

Red-wine or cider vinegar

Balsamic Vinegar

Miso

Soy Sauce/Tamari

Fish sauce

Dry Storage

Nuts (raw almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts)

Sesame seeds

Sunflower seeds

Raisins

Canned tomatoes

Canned coconut milk

Canned tuna

Bulk beans (dried--black, pinto, garbanzo, white, etc.)

Pasta

Couscous

Rice

Lentils (small French green, large regular, red lentils, split peas, etc.)

Quinoa

Rolled Oats

Flour

Polenta (coarse-ground cornmeal)

Cornmeal, medium grind

Baking powder/soda

Granulated sugar

Honey

Other

Apples (or whatever fruit is in season)

Lemons/Limes

Fresh ginger

Potatoes

