



Meatless Mondays: A Perfect Winter Soup

By Jenny Abel

During the holiday season perhaps the last thing you want is someone preaching to you about how you should cut back on your meat consumption. “How about giving us a break and waiting until after the new year when we’re all making our resolutions?” I can hear you saying. The fact is, the holiday season, when we are all consuming more than usual, is a great time to think about the food choices that we’re making and to prepare some creative and healthy options for our friends and family. Plus, we tend to forget that much of what we’re consuming at holiday meals is vegetarian; for example, almost all of the traditional sides featured in Thanksgiving meals are meat-free.

To provide some extra motivation to cut back on our carnivorous habits, consider the amount of water required to produce some of the common foods that we eat. It takes 106.28 gallons of water to produce one ounce of beef compared to 71.28 gallons for an ounce of lentils. Vegetables require much less water: 2.26 gallons for an ounce kale, 0.95 for tomatoes, and 0.85 for lettuce. According to the *Sierra* article from which I gathered these statistics, “replace meat with nuts and pulses (such as lentils, chickpeas, and beans) and the water footprint of the average American could drop by 30%.”

Below is a recipe that highlights one of those non-meat protein sources—beans—and features a tasty and abundant wintertime vegetable—sweet potatoes. Make this recipe at your next holiday gathering and watch it disappear as your guests come back for seconds and more!

Sweet Potato Black Bean Soup

Adapted from *Appetite for Reduction* by Isa Chandra Moskowitz, 2011

Serves about 8, 1 cup per serving. Prep time: 20 minutes. Cook time: 40 minutes.

Ingredients

- 5 medium sweet potatoes (about 3 pounds)
- 3 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 red onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 serrano peppers
- 4 roma tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 (16-ounce) can low-sodium black beans
- ½ cup fresh cilantro

1 cup orange juice

Directions

1. Scrub and peel sweet potatoes. Cut into ½-inch cubes.
2. Peel onions and garlic. Rinse onions, serrano peppers and tomatoes. Mince garlic. Slice onions into thin strips. Seed and mince peppers.
3. Remove tomato cores and cut into ½-inch cubes.
4. Rinse and drain beans in a colander.
5. Heat large stockpot over a medium flame. Add oil and onions; sauté onions about 7 minutes, until softened. Add peppers and garlic; sauté for 1 minute.
6. Add tomatoes, cumin, paprika and salt. Turn up heat to medium-high. Cook down tomatoes for 5-10 minutes.
7. Add sweet potatoes and vegetable stock. Cover and bring to a boil. Turn down heat. Simmer 15 minutes, or until potatoes pierce easily with a fork. Mash potatoes lightly, leaving some whole.
8. Add the black beans and continue cooking until heated through. Turn off heat.
9. Stir in cilantro and orange juice. Serve.

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