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2 tablespoons of lemon juice

2 teaspoons of cornstarch

¼ teaspoon of garlic powder

¼ teaspoon of ground ginger

Whisk all the sauce ingredients together until well blended.



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Stout Bread – Serves 15+

This bread gets its name from beer, not how you will feel after you eat it—unless you get carried away and eat the whole pan. The bread is quite good. It has a yeasty, malty darkness from the stout that's offset by the sweetness of brown sugar and molasses. You don't need to use a very expensive stout. Cheap stouts will work, but my husband prefers the bread with Guinness (in case I might have some left for him to drink!). I usually add some golden raisins to the batter and sprinkle the top of the bread with walnuts for a nice, somewhat bitter crunch. Also, the batter is quite thin, so some of the nuts will sink down into the bread. Cut the moist bread into squares to serve it. I like the bread with every meal and for snacks, too. It's that good.

1 cup of oats plus ¼ cup (divided)

2 cups of white whole-wheat flour

½ cup of dark brown sugar

1¼ teaspoons of baking soda

1 teaspoon of baking powder

½ teaspoon of salt

2 teaspoons of cinnamon

½ teaspoon of nutmeg

½ teaspoon of ginger

½ teaspoon of allspice

1/3 cup of canola oil

2 teaspoons of vanilla extract

¼ cup of molasses

1 cup of buttermilk

2 eggs

1½ cups of stout

½ cup of golden raisins (optional)

1 cup of chopped walnuts (optional)



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Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and coat a 9 x 13-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a large bowl, combine 1 cup of oats, the flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and allspice. In another bowl, whisk together the oil, vanilla extract, molasses, buttermilk, and eggs. Whisk in the beer. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ones and whisk just a bit to combine everything. You'll have a very wet batter, but don't get too zealous with the whisk. Add the raisins, if you're using them and pour the batter into the prepared pan. Sprinkle the batter with the walnuts, if you're using them, and then with the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of remaining oats. Bake the bread for about 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean or with only a few crumbs clinging to it. Let the bread cool 5-10 minutes before cutting it into squares.





December 9

...I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him.

2 Timothy 1:12

Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending he
Of the things that are, that have been
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore.

(The United Methodist Hymnal, Aurelius Clemens Prudentius,
translated by John Mason Neale)





In the Kitchen, December 9

Spinach-Avocado Salad

Garlic Baked Tilapia

Orzo with Tomatoes and Feta

Peanut Butter and Dark Chocolate Truffles

It's time to look after your body with a healthy heart dinner! To start, a spinach salad with avocado, onion, orange slices, and chopped walnuts gives you a great dose of important vitamins and heart-aiding fats. The baked tilapia doesn't taste too "fishy" and instead sends out a wonderful garlicky aroma as it bakes with crispy, cheesy whole-wheat breadcrumbs on top. Orzo with tomatoes, parsley, and feta adds wonderful color to your plate and, with whole-wheat pasta, some important fiber to your diet. You've had a healthy meal, so why ruin your good efforts with something bad for you? Instead try peanut butter and dark chocolate truffles, which, though they sound decadent and taste scrumptious, are made from ingredients that are pretty wholesome. Just don't eat them all at once!





Spinach-Avocado Salad – Serves 4-6+

This salad really is special with it's sweet-tart oranges, creamy avocados, and vitamin-rich spinach. The dressing is easy and complements, rather than hides, the flavors of the other ingredients. The pomegranate arils will add a touch of seasonal red color and another sweet-tart note to the salad, but if you don't have them, omit them or toss on a few dried cranberries instead.

4 cups of spinach leaves, washed well and dried

1 large ripe avocado, peeled, seeded, and sliced

2 large oranges, peeled and sectioned

2 tablespoons of orange juice

2 teaspoons of olive oil

1 teaspoon of sugar

Few grinds of lemon pepper seasoning

2 tablespoons of chopped walnuts, preferably toasted

½ cup of pomegranate arils (seeds), optional

Divide the spinach among the plates. Top the spinach with slices of orange and avocado. Combine orange juice, olive oil, sugar, and lemon pepper and whisk everything until the sugar dissolves. Drizzle the dressing over the salads. Top each salad with some of the chopped walnuts and pomegranate arils, if you're using them.





Garlic Baked Tilapia – Serves 4

Garlic and Parmesan cheese turn these relatively inexpensive filets into an exceptionally good dinner. The fish cooks quickly and doesn't have a "fishy" taste.

1½ pounds of tilapia fillets (4-6 fillets)

2 tablespoons of light mayonnaise

2 tablespoons of non-fat Greek yogurt

¼ teaspoon of salt

¼ teaspoon of pepper

1 tablespoon of lemon juice

½ teaspoon of garlic powder

1 teaspoon of dried parsley

½ cup of seasoned breadcrumbs, preferably whole-wheat or Panko

¼ cup of shredded Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and coat a baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray. Lay the tilapia fillets on the baking sheet. Combine the mayonnaise, yogurt, salt, pepper, lemon juice, garlic powder, and dried parsley and spread some of the mixture on each of the fillets. Sprinkle some of the breadcrumbs on top of each of the fillets, and then divide the cheese among the fillets. Bake the tilapia for 15 minutes and let it cool a minute or two before you serve it.





Orzo With Tomatoes and Feta – Serves 6

This is a versatile dish that goes well with fish or simply cooked or grilled meats. If the fresh tomatoes are too pricey in December, feel free to substitute a can (15 ounces) of diced tomatoes. The orzo won't taste as fresh, but it will be quite good. You'll probably want more.

8 ounces of orzo, preferably whole-wheat

2 tablespoons of olive oil

½ cup of crumbled feta cheese

½ cup of chopped parsley (or basil)

½ teaspoon of lemon pepper seasoning

1 pint of grape or cherry tomatoes, halved, or 1 cup of chopped tomatoes

Boil the pasta according to the directions on the package until just tender. Drain all but a little water from the pot (leave about ¼ to ½ cup, depending on how moist you like your pasta). Add the olive oil and lemon pepper and stir to coat the pasta. Gently stir in the feta, parsley, and tomatoes. Serve the orzo warm or at room temperature.



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Peanut Butter and Dark Chocolate Truffles – Makes 18

These peanut butter and chocolate truffles are full of nutritious ingredients but taste quite decadent. They are a no-bake treat. Whip the truffle mixture up in the food processor and chill the dough while you do something else. Once the dough has chilled, the truffles will be easy to roll and coat with cocoa powder. Put them on a nice plate in the refrigerator, and you'll have a quick, easy, and special after dinner indulgence that's reasonably good for you.

1 15-ounce can of white beans, drained and rinsed

2 tablespoons of peanut butter

2 tablespoons of honey

5-6 tablespoons of cocoa powder, divided

In a food processor, combine the white beans, peanut butter, honey, and 4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) of cocoa powder. Pulse everything about 10 seconds and scrape down the sides of the bowl. Pulse again until everything is combined and smooth. Chill the mixture—at least a couple of hours—and, with damp hands (keep a bowl of water nearby for ease), form the dough into 18 balls. Roll the balls in the reserved cocoa powder, place them on a plate, and cover and refrigerate the truffles until serving time.





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December 10

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Genesis 2: 15-17

The Bible has many references to food, and food captures our attention on a regular basis as we move from day to day and season to season. Our "Adam" received one order: "Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

Despite our knowledge, we see the beautiful fruit hanging from that tree in the middle of the garden: sometimes, like a magnet, it draws us to the enticing flavors, the more than adequate calories, and the sometimes ruinous prices. As Genesis unfolds we learn that God was serious about Adam's diet. By God's grace we are able to make some better choices.





In the Kitchen, December 10

Black-eyed Pea Salad

Peanut Soup or Caribbean Chicken

Coconut-Rum Plantains

Today doesn't call for takeout food, even if you're tired. You know it's not good for you—expensive and too much fat and salt. Instead try something that will feed your body in a much better way. The black-eyed pea salad has lots of lovely fiber, vegetables, and a sweet mango that will make your mouth water. With it, serve Peanut Soup, quick, creamy, and warmly spiced to ward off the chills of the day. The soup is meatless but has plenty of protein, especially if you top it with tangy yogurt. Rather have a meat dish? How about Caribbean chicken? The chicken dish is easy to put together and cooks in about 30 minutes with little tending. While your chicken is baking or your soup is simmering, you can peel and slice a few potassium-rich plantains to roast in the oven. The plantains have a sweet spicy sauce (and no actual rum) and are perfect served plain. Nonetheless, I'm sure a scoop of low-fat vanilla frozen yogurt or ice cream would cool them down wonderfully if the plantains are too hot to eat when you pull them from the oven.



DRAFT Black-eyed Pea Salad – Serves 6+

Try this smoky sweet salad that gives a tropical touch to a Southern staple—black-eyed peas. The mango in the salad really boosts the flavor, and cilantro yields a crisp freshness. Sometimes I add tomatoes, and sometimes I don't. Both ways are good. The salad is best made early in the day (or even the day before) and refrigerated so that the flavors can develop. Nonetheless, if you're short on time, just mix it up and refrigerate it for as long as you can.

1 15-ounce can of black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed

½ a medium red onion, chopped

¼ cup of chopped red sweet pepper

¼ cup fresh chopped cilantro

1 large mango, peeled, seeded, and chopped

2 tablespoons of olive oil

3 tablespoons of lime or lemon juice

¼ teaspoon of salt

¼ teaspoon of pepper

½ teaspoon of cumin

3 cups of arugula or other leafy greens

1 cup of cherry tomatoes, halved (optional)



In a large bowl, combine the black-eyed peas, onion, red pepper, cilantro, mango, and tomatoes, if you're using them. Whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, salt, pepper, and cumin and pour the dressing over the other ingredients, stirring gently to coat everything. Chill the salad, preferably for at least an hour. Mix in the arugula or other greens just before you're ready to serve the salad.



Peanut Soup – Serves 8+

America is indeed a melting pot of many cultures, and this soup combines flavors from multiple countries. The soup is unusual but not so different that people will turn up their noses. Rather, most people seem to gobble it down. The soup is nutritious, warm, and rich tasting without a lot of fat. You can vary the heat by increasing the ginger and using a spicy rather than mild curry powder. I prefer to use mild curry powder so that the other tastes in the soup come through. You certainly can serve the soup plain. Nonetheless, the soup is great dressed up with dollops of yogurt on top and sprinkled with cilantro and peanuts. The toppings are incredible with the warm soup! If you have any leftover soup, pack it up for lunch at work – though you may have coworkers waiting by your desks with their spoons, if you do.

1 15-ounce can of chickpeas, rinsed and drained

3 cups of reduced sodium chicken broth

¼ cup of peanut butter (smooth or chunky)

1 large onion, chopped

1 tablespoon of canola oil

¼ teaspoon of ginger

1½ teaspoons of curry powder (mild or spicy, if you like hot)

½ teaspoon of ground cumin

¼ teaspoon of pepper

¼ teaspoon of salt

1 28-ounce can of diced tomatoes

¼ cup of chopped roasted unsalted peanuts (optional)

¼ cup of chopped cilantro (optional)

Low or non-fat yogurt (optional)



Puree or mash the chickpeas with about ½ cup of water. You can do this in a food processor or blender or just use a potato masher with some muscle (my preferred

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method). Set the mashed chickpeas aside. Heat the oil in a large soup pot and add the onion. Sauté it for 5-10 minutes until it softens. Add the ginger, curry powder, cumin, pepper, and salt, and sauté everything for another minute or so (this helps toast and blend or “bloom” the spices). Add the broth, tomatoes, mashed chickpeas, and peanut butter and stir everything together. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer the soup for about 10 minutes to continue cooking the onions and blend the flavors. Pour the soup into bowls. Top with a bit of yogurt and sprinkle with peanuts and chopped cilantro, if you like.





Caribbean Chicken – Serves 4

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves*
- 1 onion, chopped*
- 1 teaspoon of garlic powder*
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger*
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon*
- ½ teaspoon of salt*
- Cayenne pepper to suit your taste*
- ½ cup of coconut milk*
- 2-3 tablespoons of toasted coconut (optional)*
- 2-3 tablespoons of roasted, chopped peanuts (optional)*
- 1 lime, quartered (optional)*



Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle on half of the onion and top the onion with the chicken breast halves. Sprinkle the garlic powder, ginger, cinnamon, salt, and cayenne evenly over the chicken breasts and spritz the tops of the breasts with a little cooking spray or mist them with olive oil. Sprinkle on the remainder of the onion and spritz the onion with a little cooking spray or mist them with olive oil. Bake the chicken for 15 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and drizzle the coconut milk evenly over the chicken breasts. Bake the chicken for 10-15 minutes more or until the juices run clear when pricked with a fork and the chicken is done. If you'd like, sprinkle each serving with a little toasted coconut and chopped peanuts and serve a wedge of lime alongside to squeeze over each piece of chicken.