

The Flavors of Fall

No foods suggest fall quite like apples and butternut squash, the quintessential fruits of the fall harvest. Typically these fall delicacies are transformed into pies (butternut squash makes an excellent substitute for pumpkin) or stored for use throughout the winter. But your fall harvest repertoire needn't be limited to pies and side dishes. The following recipes combine the fall harvest with enough hearty proteins to transform them into complete meals.

Coincidentally, my two favorite fall recipes feature coconut as a main ingredient. Don't be put off by this; coconut's unhealthy reputation is quite undeserved. In fact, coconut contains lauric acid, an essential fatty acid that helps strengthen the immune system. Yes, coconut does contain saturated fat, but minimally-processed vegetable-based saturated fats are *not* the enemy. What you really need to watch out for are those highly-processed hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils. If you have any doubts, check out the fascinating cookbook *Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon, who explores the many myths of how certain kinds of fat became demonized, and what we really need to eat to remain healthy.

Indian-style Split Pea Soup with Apples & Coconut

Split peas are a delicious, inexpensive form of protein. Stock up so you always have some on hand. Fall provides us with an abundance of fresh-picked apples. Choose your favorites for this flavorful and nutritious soup.

1 c. Green Split Peas (picked over, and soaked overnight in warm water...see column at right for details)

½ tsp. Ground Ginger

1 tsp. Ground Cumin

2" Cinnamon Stick

6 Whole Cloves

1 tbs. Ghee or Oil

1 tsp. Turmeric

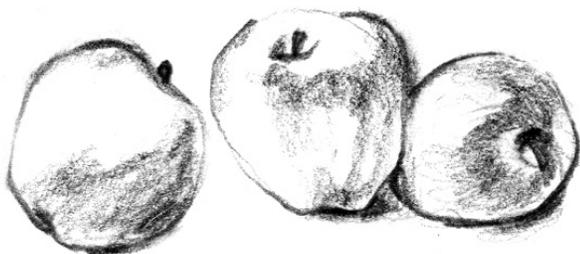
6 c. Water

1 Apple

¼ c. Coconut (dried & shredded)

2 tbsp. Fresh Cilantro, finely chopped (optional)

1. Fry cinnamon and cloves in ghee or oil for a few minutes to release flavors.
2. Add all remaining ingredients except cilantro.
3. Cook until split peas are completely tender and disintegrating. Add water if need be while cooking.
4. Remove cloves and cinnamon stick.
5. Puree soup in blender until smooth.
6. Add sea salt to taste.
7. Top with fresh chopped coriander.



Why You Should Soak Dried Beans & Peas

Soaking dried beans and peas overnight will reduce cooking time, which will save you both time and energy. The same is true for whole grains, like brown rice, barley, and wheat berries. By presoaking, I've been able to cook brown basmati rice in under 20 minutes. I don't even cook smaller pulses, like lentils; I simply cover them, bring them to a boil (in fresh water, not the water I've soaked them in), then turn the heat off. The lentils "cook" while sitting in the hot water.

Soaking will also help remove the phytates and germination inhibitors found in grains, legumes and seeds, which some nutritionists (most notably *Nourishing Traditions* author Sally Fallon) believe may interfere with nutrient absorption. To best reduce phytate content, warm the water to about 115°. If you don't have a thermometer, 115° is about the hottest water can become before it will feel too hot to keep your finger in it. Adding a bit of lemon juice or whey will also facilitate the process of phytate reduction.

Whether or not you're concerned about phytates, warm water still is the best way to soak the split peas, as they will soften more readily in warm water. Just be sure to warm the water on the stove. **DO NOT USE WARM WATER DIRECTLY FROM THE TAP!** Heavy metals (from lead pipes) and toxic chemicals (from PVC pipes) will dissolve more readily when warm water passes through them. You do *not* want to be ingesting heavy metals and toxic chemicals unnecessarily.

Even if you believe that you have the safest plumbing system in the world, why risk it? You are not saving energy by drawing from your hot water tank instead of heating it on your stove. Either way, it takes energy to heat the water. And when you draw from the hot water tank, you waste water while you're waiting for the water to "warm up". To conserve energy, heat up only as much water as you need.

The Many Benefits of Butternut Squash

Butternut squash, like other deep orange vegetables, is rich in beta carotene, an anti-oxidant that may help protect against cancer. Butternut squash is also a good source of vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, and potassium. The dense sweet flesh of the squash is surprisingly rich in fiber—one cup of cooked squash contains more than 5.5 grams of fiber!

Since butternut squash is a storage crop that requires no refrigeration until cut open, it can usually be found at an affordable price during the dead of winter, often from a local or regional source. So it makes good economic and environmental sense to include butternut squash in your fall and winter diet as frequently as possible. With a vegetable this tasty and nutritious, that shouldn't be too hard!

Autumn Squash Sautee

by Alyson Green

- 1 c. Red Lentils
- 4 tbsp. Olive Oil (more if desired)
- 4 Shallots, chopped
- 2 lrg. Garlic Cloves, minced
- 1 lrg. Butternut Squash, peeled, seeded and cut into small cubes
- 1 can (16 oz.) Diced Tomatoes
- ½ tsp. Fresh Thyme, chopped
- ½ tsp. Ground Cumin
- 2 tbsp. Golden Raisins
- 1 c. Water Chestnuts
- Salt and Pepper to taste

1. Cook lentils until soft but not mushy.
2. Heat oil in a large pan.
3. Sautee the shallots and garlic until just tender.
4. Add the squash and cook for a few minutes.
5. Add the tomatoes, thyme, cumin and raisins, and cook for 10 minutes.
6. Add the cooked lentils and cook an additional 10 minutes.
7. Add the water chestnuts and allow to simmer until warmed through and tender.
8. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 4-6 very hungry people.

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Thai-Style Coconut Tofu

- 1 lb. Firm Tofu (water-packed)
- 1 can (14 oz.) Coconut Milk
- 1 Onion
- 1-2 Hot Peppers
- ½ tsp. Powdered Ginger (more if desired)
- ½ Butternut Squash, cut into thin slices
- 1.5 c. Frozen Peas
- 1 Bunch Cilantro, finely chopped



1. Press tofu (see our Spring 2003 edition for details).
2. Process coconut milk, onion, hot peppers and ginger in a blender until smooth.
3. Cut tofu in small squares and simmer in coconut milk blend for 5-10 minutes, until sauce begins to thicken.
4. Add butternut squash and cover. Stir frequently. If the sauce is too thick, add water. If the sauce is too watery, remove cover while cooking.
5. When butternut squash is almost done, add peas.
6. Cook for 2-3 minutes, until peas and squash are done.
7. Remove from stove and add cilantro.
8. Add sea salt to taste.
9. Serve over brown basmati rice.



Don't Vaporize Your Money

Want to reduce the energy you consume heating up water? Please, don't start with hot water from your tap; there's too much risk of heavy metals and/or toxic chemicals dissolving in the water. Instead, follow these two tips for reducing the energy consumption of heating water:

1. Heat only as much water as you need. Why waste energy heating up extra?
2. If you make tea frequently, invest in a whistling tea pot. That way you'll know exactly when your water is boiling and you won't let it boil away unnecessarily.