

Everyday Basics Cooking Series: Vegetables, Beans & Grains

January/February 2011

Menu:

Grilled Shrimp and Brown Rice Salad
with Cilantro-Peanut Dressing

Butternut Squash Gratin with
Creamy Tomato Sauce and Mozzarella

Lentil Dal with Fresh Ginger and Cilantro

Dijon Green Bean Salad

Grilled Shrimp & Brown Rice Salad with Cilantro-Peanut Dressing

serves 6

For the dressing:

1 clove garlic, peeled
1 cup cilantro leaves
1 lime, zest and juice
1 tsp honey
2 tbl rice wine vinegar
1/2 cup dry roasted peanuts
1/2 cup olive oil
salt and pepper

For the salad:

1 1/2 cups brown basmati rice
3 cups chicken stock, as needed
1 english cucumbers, diced
2 cups baby tomatoes, halved
3 scallions, sliced
1 lb large shrimp, peeled, deveined, tail removed

*** Preparation ****

For the dressing

In a food processor, combine the garlic, cilantro, lime zest and juice, honey, vinegar, peanuts and olive oil. Pulse until well-chopped. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

For the salad:

Combine the brown rice with enough stock to cover by about 1 1/2 inches. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit for 10 minutes.

Heat a grill pan over high heat.

Meanwhile, combine the vegetables in a large bowl. Toss the shrimp with olive oil, salt and pepper. Grill the shrimp until cooked through.

Just before serving, toss the warm rice with the vegetables, shrimp and dressing. Moisten with more olive oil or lime juice as needed. Taste and season with more salt and pepper as needed.

Butternut Squash Gratin with Creamy Tomato Sauce & Mozzarella

serves 8 people

For the sauce:

1 white onion, finely diced
3 garlic cloves, chopped
2 28-oz cans crushed tomatoes
1 tbl dried oregano
1/2 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup chopped basil

For the gratin:

2 medium butternut squash, (with long necks)
1 log fresh mozzarella
1 1/2 cups grated parmesan

***** Preparation ******

For the sauce:

Place a medium pot over medium-high heat. Add olive oil to lightly coat the bottom of the pan. Add the onion and cook until soft. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and oregano. Cook over medium-low heat for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cream and basil. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

For the gratin:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Peel the squash and cut the necks into 1/4-inch slices.

In a 8x8-inch baking dish, spoon in a bit of the tomato sauce to coat the bottom of the pan. Add a layer of the squash, overlapping just slightly. Season with salt and pepper. Add a layer of the mozzarella and some Parmesan cheese. Repeat with four layers, finishing with the cheese layer.

Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 15 minutes or until golden and bubbling. Let cool 15 minutes before serving.

Lentil Dal with Fresh Ginger & Cilantro

serve 4-6

1 cup yellow or brown lentils
1 tsp tumeric
1 tsp salt
4 cups water
2 tbl grapeseed oil
1 tbl grated ginger
1 tsp minced garlic
1/2 tsp red chili flakes
1 tsp ground cumin
1 lemon, juiced, as needed
1/2 cup chopped cilantro

***** Preparation ******

Combine the lentils, tumeric, salt and water in a pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes until lentils are very soft. Remove from heat and whisk vigorously -- this will break up the lentils and thicken the dal slightly. Taste and season with more salt as needed.

In a small skillet, heat the oil. Add the ginger, garlic, red chili and cumin. Cook for just a few seconds until very fragrant -- do not burn the garlic. Quickly pour the mixture into the dal. Add juice of half a lemon and the chopped cilantro. Taste and add more lemon as needed.

Serve warm.

Dijon Green Bean Salad

serves 4-6

1 lb green beans, trimmed
2 tbl smooth dijon mustard
1 small shallot, finely diced
2 tbl white wine vinegar
1/3 cup olive oil
1/4 cup capers
salt and pepper, as needed

***** Preparation ******

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add a small handful of salt. Add the green beans and boil for about 1 minute -- until bright green. Remove the beans and plunge them into a bowl of ice water. Let sit while you make the dressing.

In a large bowl, whisk together the dijon, shallots and vinegar. Slowly whisk in the olive oil. Add in the capers.

Drain the green beans and pat dry. Add to the large bowl with the dressing and toss to coat. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.