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Volume 7 Issue 08

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Salt: The Scapegoat for the Western Diet

During my seven years of medical school and residency training, which began forty years ago, I learned two—only two—dietary lessons to share with my patients: switch from butter to margarine and reduce salt. Both pearls were supposed to save my patients from heart attacks and strokes, but neither did. The trans fats in margarine actually promote artery disease. Their dangers are so well recognized that the state of California, New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Brookline, and Montgomery County, MD have banned the use of these synthetic fats in restaurants. Remaining is only one pillar of knowledge from my basic education, "Don't eat salt." PAGE 2

Highlights from the July 2008 Costa Rica Adventure Trip

"Would I recommend this trip to any individual who just wants to have fun and visit with like-minded folks who are traveling on the same path to better health? Yes, yes, yes!" Geri Combs PAGE 8

Featured Recipes

All of the following recipes were demonstrated (and tasted!) during the McDougall Celebrity Chef Weekend in June, 2008.

Gazpacho Verde
Gazpacho Verde Salsa
Smoky Refried Bean Soup
Skillet Gardener's Pie
Spicy Southwestern Tofu Burgers
White Miso Soup
Chai-Spiced Oat Crepes with Grilled Mangos or Nectarines and Citrus-Almond
"Ricotta" Filling
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Lush Tropical Forests



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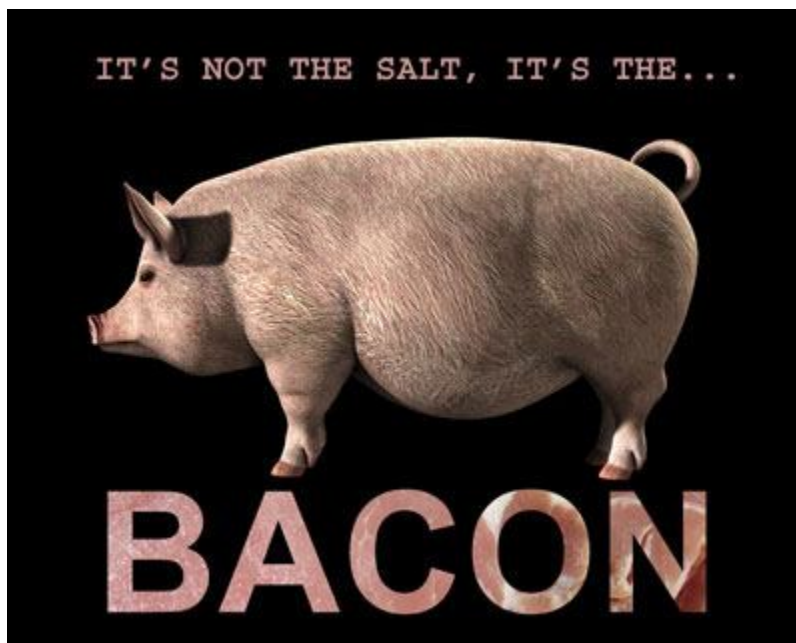
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Salt: The Scapegoat for the Western Diet



During my seven years of medical school and residency training, which began forty years ago, I learned two—only two—dietary lessons to share with my patients: switch from butter to margarine and reduce salt. Both pearls were supposed to save my patients from heart attacks and strokes, but neither did. The trans fats in margarine actually promote artery disease. Their dangers are so well recognized that the state of California, New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Brookline, and Montgomery County, MD have banned the use of these synthetic fats in restaurants. Remaining is only one pillar of knowledge from my basic education, “Don’t eat salt.”

Sodium restriction is today the most widely publicized non-medication recommendation for heart disease and stroke prevention. Unfortunately, this advice has proven ineffective. Despite the vast amount of scientific research that has been published over the past seventy years, there is still little agreement as to the efficacy, safety, and acceptability of dietary salt reduction.¹ In 2007, the authors of the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (The NHANES study) representing nearly 100 million US adults reported that there is “a robust, significant, and consistent significant inverse association between dietary sodium and cardiovascular mortality.”² This means people who eat more salt have a lower risk of death from heart disease and stroke.



III

Even if less salt meant better health, people’s eating habits are near impossible to change, simply because so few of us are able to successfully make the transition to what are considered to be unpalatable foods. Our biological craving for salt has made this an unachievable goal. Focusing on an impossible dream—“eat low salt”—does, however, assure no consequential health changes will occur in our society—and that means consumers continue their same buying habits, food companies remain highly profitable, people remain sick, and drug companies enjoy record profits. In contrast, a meaningful message, like “stop eating meat and cheese, and instead focus your diet on rice and potatoes,” would revolutionize the world—but those now in control of governments and “health” organizations repress

Research Says Low Sodium Can Be Unhealthy

Quote from the *British Medical Journal* (2002):³

“Lowering sodium intake may have adverse effects on vascular endothelium through stimulation of the renin-angiotensin system and on serum total and low density lipoprotein cholesterol concentrations. In cohort studies, lower salt intake in people with hypertension has been associated with higher levels of cardiovascular disease and in general populations with greater all cause mortality.”

Quote about the NHANES III study from the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* (2008)⁴

“Observed associations of lower sodium with higher mortality were modest and mostly not statistically significant. However, these findings also suggest that for the general US adult population, higher sodium is unlikely to be independently associated with higher CVD

profitable businesses don’t want to see that day come anytime soon. The status quo will indeed continue until the truth about salt becomes accepted.

No Salt, No Sale

As an Internal Medicine Resident in training, thirty-two years ago, one of my jobs was to convince my patients with severe kidney disease to eat "salt-less" butter and "salt-less" cheese. "You must be kidding, doc, this tastes like a glob of grease," was a common response. Salt is said to bring out the flavors of a good steak—it had better, because no one enjoys plain boiled beef. Salt is a powerfully pleasing taste. The tongue's tip is covered with taste buds specifically for detecting saltiness. This was not a mistake of nature. We are designed to seek salt—causing us to consume essential minerals, including sodium. Without minerals, life would be impossible. Pleasure is the reward for correct behaviors. Under natural conditions our senses don't harm us. The food processing industries have, however, found clever ways to turn our natural instincts against us.

The overpowering taste of salt tricks us into eating foods that innately repulse human beings. This flavoring will disguise the repugnant tastes of animal flesh and cow's milk secretions, which are the real sources of body damage. Eighty percent of the salt consumed by people following the Western diet is irreversibly intermingled with our processed foods. That's why scientific research, especially studies of the eating habits of various populations, incriminates salt, because it is mixed up with and made indistinguishable from bacon grease. Any benefits seen when people attempt a traditional low-sodium diet result from giving up the fat, cholesterol, refined flour, and sugar in their salt-laden "junk" food—from breakfast burritos to monster burgers. The sodium is incidental—an innocent bystander, rather than the villain.

So let me state a more moderate, socially acceptable, politically correct, viewpoint. Eating salt is not wrong when it is added in small amounts to otherwise healthy ingredients, like starches and vegetables. The basic ingredients of McDougall meals are very low sodium; you then add salt to taste. You will find a shaker full on every table at every McDougall Program. Dr. McDougall's Rightfoods meals in a cup contain a separate package of seasonings with salt. Salt makes the McDougall Diet enjoyable from the start, even for the uninitiated carnivore. The way we serve salt, consumption is at your discretion, you are in control. If you choose, taste adaptation to lower sodium is easily achieved in a short time—which will make friends, relatives, dietitians, and personal physicians content.

The Body Efficiently Regulates Salt

Human kidneys efficiently conserve sodium and excrete potassium. They were evolved (designed) this way because the natural diet of humans has been, until recently, high in potassium (starches, vegetables, and fruits) and low in sodium (salt was a rare and expensive commodity). Fortunately, human evolution and design also made our bodies able to survive at the other extreme with kidneys that efficiently conserve potassium and eliminate all the sodium you can eat. (Death from eating excess potassium or sodium is rare in an otherwise healthy person, unless the ingredient is given in large amounts, rapidly and/or without sufficient amounts of fresh water.) When a low-sodium diet is consumed, the intestines increase their sodium absorption, and the kidneys reduce the loss into urine. If the diet is high in salt then the opposite physiologic changes occur. Healthy bodies never mismanage this life-sustaining regulation.

Salt, Historically Valued

Roman soldiers were paid with salt, a *salarium*, which is the derivation of "salary."

Greek slave traders often bartered salt for slaves, giving rise to the expression that someone was "not worth his salt."

Covenants in both the Old and New Testaments were often sealed with salt. Thus the origin of the word "salvation."

Jesus called His disciples "the Salt of the Earth."

"Sitting above the salt" refers to the place of aristocracy above the common folk.

The French welcome *Salut* is derived from the word for salt

Humans consume a wide range of sodium from less than 250 mg/day to over 30,000 mg/day. For example, a sodium intake of about 200 mg daily has been documented in the Yanomamo Indians living in the Amazon Basin of Brazil.⁵ In 1959, the daily ration of Korean soldiers included 30,000 mg of crude sea salt a day (11,000 mg of sodium daily).⁶ Farmers in



Northern Japan have been reported to consume daily 27 grams of salt (10,000 mg of sodium).⁶ People following the rich Western diet consume on average 3,500 mg of sodium daily.

A basic diet of starches, vegetables, and fruits (the McDougall Diet) with no added sodium provides less than 500 mg of sodium daily. Adding a half-teaspoon of salt to the surface of your McDougall dishes daily adds about 1100 mg of sodium—making the total daily intake 1600 mg. The “low-sodium diet” fed to a hospitalized patient, following a massive heart attack, under the expert guidance of doctors and dietitians, contains 2000 mg of sodium. Now you understand why I am comfortable putting the saltshaker on the dining tables at our programs.

The body so effectively conserves precious minerals that sodium deficiency from any natural diet is un-

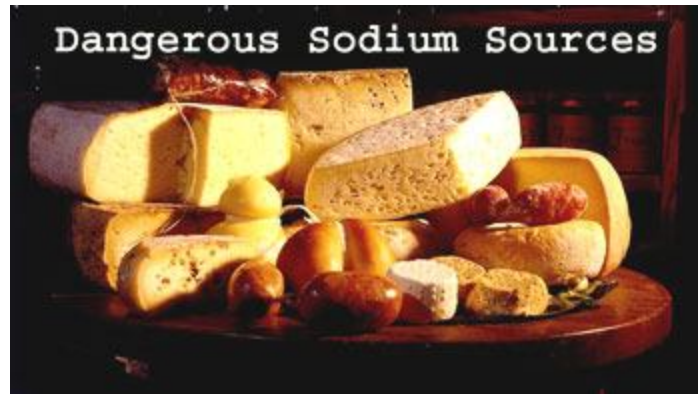
known. Even Ironman triathlon runners competing in 12-hour long races require no sodium supplementation.⁷ However, illness from too little sodium in the body rarely can be caused by profuse and prolonged sweating and/or diarrhea, extreme water drinking, and/or diuretics (commonly). Too much sodium has been blamed for causing hypertension, osteoporosis, kidney stones, and cancer.

Salt Does Raise Blood Pressure—A Little The major concern for eating salt is elevated blood pressure, which is a risk factor for strokes, heart attacks, and kidney disease. Randomized clinical trials show that lowering the intake of sodium by 1725 to 2300 mg a day (from a previous higher salt intake) lowers the systolic blood pressure (top number) by 1 to 5 mmHg and the diastolic (bottom number) by 0.6 to 3 mmHg.^{8*} The largest blood pressure responses to sodium intake are seen below 2300 mg per day. Individual sensitivities to sodium are highly variable. People of African descent and patients with underlying diseases, such as diabetes and kidney disease, have a greater rise in blood pressure in response to salt intake.

*Note for comparison: On the McDougall Diet without any limitation of salt added to the foods at the table, the average reduction in blood pressure (for people starting at 140/90 mmHg or greater) in 7 days is 15 mmHg systolic and 13 mmHg diastolic; and blood pressure medications are almost always stopped the first day of the program.

A “no added sodium diet” is not enough.

Salt is a combination of sodium and chloride, but only the sodium component is commonly reported and discussed. However, just as important are other ingredients in the foods, including chloride and potassium.⁹ In experimental models of hypertension, dietary sodium with anions other than chloride does not cause hypertension.¹⁰ The rise in blood pressure from increased sodium chloride intake is blunted by a diet that is high in potassium or low in fat; in other words a diet of starches, vegetables, and fruits counteracts the negative effects of common salt.¹¹ Plant foods are inherently low in sodium, chloride, and fat (exceptions being nuts, seeds, avocados, etc.) and high in potassium. In plants there are thousands of ingredients, some identified and many others to be discovered, that keep the blood pressure low, the blood vessels strong, and the body healthy. On the Western diet, sodium serves first and foremost as a marker for how much pizza, fried chicken, bacon, and egg croissants people eat.



Sodium and Potassium Are Often Found In Reciprocal Proportions	Sodium/ 100 Calories	Potassium/ 100 Calories	Ratio K/Na
Cow's Milk	80	247	3
Cheddar Cheese	154	24	0.2
Chicken	34	93	3
Fried Chicken	187	87	0.5
Egg	80	81	1
Egg croissant	215	49	.2
Cheeseburger	261	106	.5
Bacon	278	84	0.3
Ham	830	198	.2
Cheese pizza	840	79	.3
Grapes	1	303	300
Banana	1	430	430
Peach	1	462	460
Cabbage	353	430	1.2
Carrots	80	752	9
Rice	6	24	4
Peas	4	431	108
Potato	8	425	53
Corn	16	229	14

People following vegetarian diets have been consistently found to have lower blood pressure, irrespective of their sodium intake; and indigenous communities in which hypertension is rare typically consume a diet that resembles far more of a vegetarian than a western, urban diet (even when their native diet may be very high in sodium).¹² When these people migrate to the city and westernize their diets with more animal products and processed foods they develop hypertension, type-2 diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. It's the basic foods, not the salt that underlies health and disease.

Other Salt Concerns

Salt restriction can be lifesaving for people with severely damaged hearts and kidneys. Sensitive people can develop swelling (edema) from salt; reported as swollen feet after a couple of salty tomato juices on a long airplane ride or swollen fingers after a Chinese dinner. Because food is made less palatable, salt restriction results in lower calorie intake, and hopefully, more loss of excess weight. (Salt contains no calories.)



The real differences between sea salt and table salt are in their taste due to the various kinds of minerals (how amazing that the tongue can perceive these minute differences) and the texture. Table salt is the most common kind used. It is mined from the ground and refined into pure sodium chloride. Sea salt generally refers to unrefined salt derived from the ocean or sea. Table salt often contains added iodine (iodized salt). Sea salt naturally contains iodine and has considerable fluoride.⁶ Examples of sea salts are: Black Salt, Celtic Salt, Coarse Salt, Flake Salt, French Sea Salt, Grey Salt, Hawaiian Sea Salt, Italian Sea Salt, Kosher Salt, Organic Salt, Sea Salt, and Smoked Sea Salt.²¹

Sodium also causes the kidneys to lose calcium. However, this is not an important factor in the cause of osteoporosis or kidney stones.¹³⁻¹⁵ Furthermore, the potassium and alkaline materials (carbonate yielding citrates) found in a healthy plant-food-based diet compensate for the calcium losing effects of the sodium (and the acidic animal proteins).¹³

Stomach cancer (gastric adenocarcinoma) is the second leading cause of cancer death worldwide. It has been suggested that consumption of salty foods causes this cancer; however, current research does not support this belief.¹⁶ Consumption of red and processed meat, and the lack of fruits and vegetables, has been well established to be the real cause of this deadly cancer.^{17,18}

Effective Diet Therapy

In 1939 Walter Kempner, MD introduced the rice diet for the treatment of serious medical problems, including severe hypertension, congestive heart failure, kidney failure, and diabetes at Duke University School of Medicine.^{19,20} In 2002 I visited the Rice Diet Clinic in Durham, North Carolina and compared notes with the

doctors working at this famous facility (Dr. Kempner retired in 1992 and died in 1997 at age 94). Patients with many ailments have had their health restored with the Kempner diet of rice with fruit, and later on, vegetables and a few animal products. As a result of the pioneering work of Dr. Kempner, for almost 70 years diet therapy has been available for every doctor to cure his or her patients. The greatest obstacle to widespread deployment of this treatment has been the unfamiliar taste of the rice-based-meals due to preparation without any added salt. My 32 years of diet-focused medical experience has taught me that the major benefits of the rice diet are from the rice. Understanding that salt is not a health issue (except for the very ill) has allowed me to design a program that works for you and I for a lifetime, because it tastes good.

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Highlights from the July 2008 Costa Rica Adventure Trip

"Would I recommend this trip to any individual who just wants to have fun and visit with like-minded folks who are traveling on the same path to better health? Yes, yes, yes!" Geri Combs





"I now can understand why so many make this an annual/semiannual event. Where could you go to find such a beautiful place with so much fun stuff to do each day and still have the delectable food too?" Carolyn and Glenn McCort



"For many years I've traveled much of the world - mostly studying the Art and Architecture of many countries. We had a saying that food didn't really matter that much since we had "eye candy" to keep us happy. Thank you for providing not only "eye candy" but "soul candy". I'd go on any of your trips in a New York minute." My best, Catherine Kaufman



"My scales at home proved that you really can eat all you want and still lose weight. Thank you for the careful behind the scenes attention you and your wife gave to make sure every meal was just right. Awesome adventures every day. I also really appreciated the guides." Mike and Arlys Fillman

The next Costa Rica trip will be February 4 to 11, 2009. Sign up soon, spaces fill up quickly. Right now airline tickets are affordable.

Much more [information](#) is on the web site.

Or e-mail carol@drmcDougall.com or phone Carol at (800) 941-7111 or (616) 874-8155



Featured Recipes

Here are some additional delicious recipes from the June 2008 Celebrity Chef weekend.

Gazpacho Verde

By Eric Tucker

This chilled soup is bright in flavor and refreshing. An under-ripe green tomato or tomatillo adds pungency, while ripe green zebra or an Aunt Ruby's German Green will add sweetness.

4 stalks of scallion, rough chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 medium English cucumber, seeded, rough chopped
1 green zucchini, rough chopped
1 cup rough chopped green tomato, or tomatillo
1/2 bunch parsley, rough chopped
2 teaspoons fresh oregano
1 cup packed spinach, kale, or chard
Fresh basil, cilantro, tarragon, herbs of choice
2 teaspoons white miso
Juice of 1/2 lime
2 cups water
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until fairly smooth. Do not over blend or you will heat up the mix and cook the chlorophyll, turning the soup brown. Chill the soup before serving. Serve each portion with 2 -3 tablespoons of the salsa

Gazpacho Verde Salsa

2 stalks scallion, sliced thin
1 jalapeno or Serrano chile, seeded and minced
1/2 medium English cucumber, seeded, 1/3 inch dice
1 small zucchini, 1/3 inch dice
1 cup halved cherry tomatoes
Juice of 1 lime
2 tablespoons each cilantro and mint leaves
1 avocado, diced (optional)
Salt to taste

Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl.

Mary's Note: I have heard from several people who say this is now a staple on their summer menu. This is great for using fresh garden tomatoes, zucchini and cucumber.

Smoky Refried Bean Soup

By Susan Voisin

This soup is so thick it's almost a chili. Use the minimum amounts of chipotle chili powder and hot sauce to make this a mild dish or add more to make it as hot as you dare.

1 large onion, chopped
3 - 4 cloves garlic, minced
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 1/2 cups vegetable broth
1 14-ounce can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
1 15-ounce can fat-free refried beans
1 15-ounce can black beans, drained
1 cup frozen corn kernels
1 teaspoon cumin
1 1/2 teaspoon smoked Spanish paprika
1/8 - 1 teaspoon chipotle chili powder (to taste)
1 teaspoon hot sauce (or to taste)
1/2 teaspoon Mexican oregano (or 1 tsp. regular oregano)
salt and pepper, to taste

Heat a large, non-stick pot and sauté the onion until it begins to brown, adding a little water if necessary to prevent sticking. Add the garlic and bell pepper and cook for one more minute. Add all the remaining ingredients and cook until the flavors blend, 20-30 minutes.

Serving suggestion: Garnish with fresh tomato salsa and serve with baked tortilla chips and a large salad.

Mary's Note: I have heard from quite a few people who make this on a regular basis because it is their favorite fast soup. I always have these ingredients available in my kitchen and this wonderful soup can be on the table in 45 minutes, start to finish.

Skillet Gardener's Pie

By Susan Voisin

I used kidney beans here because I like their flavor and texture in this dish. But feel free to substitute about 1-1/2 cups of any cooked beans or lentils

2 pounds Yukon gold potatoes
1/2 cup plain soy milk
salt and pepper, to taste
1 large onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 large carrots, diced
2 ribs celery, diced
8 ounces mushrooms, diced
2 cups vegetable broth
16 ounces (1 can) kidney beans, drained
2 cups green beans, cut in 1" pieces (frozen cut green beans can be used)
1 1/2 teaspoons thyme
2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, minced (or 1 tsp. dried)
1/4 teaspoon sage
2 cups baby spinach leaves, packed
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons water (or veg. broth)
extra fresh rosemary for garnish

Scrub the potatoes and cut them into cubes. (I leave mine unpeeled, but if you want you can peel them before dicing.) Place potatoes in a large pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil and simmer until potatoes are tender. Reserve a cup of their cooking water, if possible, and drain. Place in a large bowl, add the soymilk, and mash until smooth, adding a little of the potato-cooking water if they seem too dry. Add salt and freshly ground pepper to taste and set aside in a warm place.

While the potatoes are cooking, make the "pie" filling. Heat a large non-stick or cast iron skillet on a medium-high burner and add the onions. Sauté until onions are translucent, adding a little water if necessary to pre-

vent sticking. Add the garlic, carrots, celery, and mushrooms, and sauté for 3 more minutes.

Add the vegetable broth, kidney beans, green beans, and herbs. Simmer on medium heat for 20 minutes until all vegetables are tender. Add salt and pepper to taste. There should still be some liquid in the pan, but if it has become too dry, add a little of the potato-cooking water. Add the spinach and stir until it's completely wilted.

Mix the cornstarch with the water until smooth, and add it to the pan. Cook, stirring, until mixture has thickened.

Spoon the potatoes evenly over the top of the filling and sprinkle with chopped rosemary. If potatoes have cooled, put the skillet under the broiler for a minute or two. Serve immediately while hot.

Mary's Note: This is a fantastic "pie" that does not have to be baked in the oven, all it requires is some simmering on the stovetop.

Spicy Southwestern Tofu Burgers

By Colleen Patrick-Goudreau

This recipe was created to replicate a favorite store-bought tofu burger of mine, and I'm thrilled to have fulfilled my quest!

16 ounces extra firm tofu, frozen and thawed
2 tablespoons ground flax seeds
6 tablespoons water
1 1/2 cups bread crumbs or cracker meal
1 red pepper, diced
1 cup corn kernels (roasted corn kernels would be ideal)
1/4 cup fat-free refried beans
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 teaspoon cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
Extra water for binding
Salt, to taste

Squeeze out all the water from the thawed tofu, and crumble it into a large bowl, using your hands. You can leave some larger chunks, but definitely crumble it enough so that it will bind with the other ingredients well.

Add the ground flax seeds and water to a small food processor bowl or blender, and blend until it becomes thick and viscous. Stop the machine at one point, and scrape down the sides to make sure all the ground seeds get combined with the water. (I usually blend it for 2 minutes.)

Add the flax seed mixture to the tofu, along with all the other ingredients, up until the extra water. Combine everything using a wooden spoon, and then your hands to feel the consistency. You want to make sure all the spices are thoroughly combined and that you can create patties from the mixture. Taste, and add salt, as necessary.

Add a tablespoon or two of water to help bind the patties, as needed.

Using your hands, form the mixture into patties. Bake under the broiler for 3 minutes each side or in a 375-degree oven for 10 minutes each side.

Mary's Note: I am always looking for new burger recipes and this is a firm, smoky burger with delicious flavor. To freeze tofu, just put the unopened container of tofu (not silken) into the freezer and freeze for at least 24 hours. Thaw on the counter for several hours, or put the unopened package in a bowl of boiling water to speed thawing time.

White Miso Soup

By Kevin Dunn

Yield: Serves 1 person

8 ounces Dashi (see recipe below)
1 teaspoon sake
2 tablespoons white miso
1/2 strip Wakame, softened and chopped
3 cubes firm tofu
1 tablespoon scallions, cut on a bias

Heat the Dashi and the sake to a strong simmer in a saucepan (160 degrees).

Next whisk the white miso into the Dashi. Don't allow this to boil only simmer. Place the tofu and Wakame in a warm cup. Pour Dashi mixture over the tofu and Wakame. Garnish with scallions cut on a bias.

Dashi:

1 1/2 quarts water
1 piece kombu, 3X6-inch piece
1/2 cup cold water (reserve for third step)
2 cups smoked Dulse flakes

Simmer the Kombu in the 1 1/2 quarts of water. When you have attained a strong simmer, remove the pot from the stove and remove the Kombu(reserve the Kombu it may be used twice). Add the cold water and the smoked Dulse flakes. Allow the flakes to sit in the broth until it all sinks, approximately 15 minutes. Strain and reserve the Dulse, it can be used twice. This broth will keep in the refrigerator for at least a week.

Hint: If you can't find the sea vegetables needed for this recipe in your local Asian markets, then try this website: <http://www.seaveg.com/>

Mary's Note: Our Japanese cooking instructor says this is her new favorite Dashi. The smoked Dulse gives this a very rich flavor. Miso soup is best made 1 cup at a time for the freshest flavor.

Chai-Spiced Oat Crepes with Grilled Mangos or Nectarines and Citrus-Almond "Ricotta" Filling

By Bryanna Clark Grogan

A special occasion brunch dish that is actually very easy to make, and can be made ahead and quickly assembled and heated just before serving. If you don't have nectarines or mangoes, you can use fresh or frozen sliced peaches instead. Note: These crepes can be made without the Chai Spices and used as ordinary crepes.

Chai-Spiced Crepes (makes about 12)

2 1/4 cups nondairy milk
3/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour (do not substitute ordinary whole wheat flour)
3/4 cup oat flour (2/3 cup rolled oats, ground in a dry blender or electric coffee/spice mill)
3/4 cup extra-firm silken tofu
1/3 cup chickpea flour (besan) or low-fat soy flour
1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
3/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 teaspoon baking powder

Chai Spice Mix:



1 teaspoon ground ginger
3/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/2 teaspoon freshly-ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground anise
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
2-3 pinches ground nutmeg
1 pinch turmeric

Citrus-Almond "Ricotta" Filling (see recipe below)

Grilled Nectarines or Mangoes:

12 ripe nectarines OR 3-4 ripe mangoes
1/4 cup maple syrup or agave nectar
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

To make the recipe, have ready:

Chai-Spiced Oat Crepes (these can be made several days ahead and refrigerated or frozen)

Citrus Almond "Ricotta" Filling (this can be made several days ahead and refrigerated)

Grilled Nectarines or Mangoes (make these just before putting the crepes together)

Garnish: Grated orange peel

To make the Crepes:

Process all of the ingredients in a food processor or a blender until very smooth. (You do not need to "rest" the batter before cooking, as you do with egg crepes.)

Heat a good nonstick 8" skillet (a shallow crepe skillet is the best, if you have one) over medium-high heat. Use 3-4 tablespoons of batter per crepe (stirring the batter before you make each crepe), rolling and tilting the pan until it evenly covers the bottom. Cover the pan and cook for a few seconds, or until the top looks dry. Carefully loosen the crepe with a very thin plastic spatula. Stack the cooked crepes on a plate and cover them with a clean napkin. (These crepes are quite tender and it is difficult to flip them over-- with this method of cooking, you don't have to.)

Either fill the crepes right away and serve as directed below, or let them cool and place in a plastic bag or rigid container (with pieces of waxed paper in between each crepe), and refrigerate for up to 3 days, or freeze them for future use (thaw thoroughly before filling).

Grilled Nectarines or Mangoes: (Make just before serving)

Thinly slice the nectarines or mangoes. Place the slices in a large shallow baking pan, nonstick, or lined with cooking parchment. Place under the oven's broiler (3-4" from the heat source). Broil them, tossing now and then, until they are soft and slightly charred. Add maple syrup or agave nectar and lemon juice and mix lightly.

To assemble, heat, and serve the crepes:

Place 2 to 3 tablespoons of the filling down the center of each crepe and roll up. Place the filled crepes in one layer in shallow baking pans lined with cooking parchment. Cover the pans with foil and bake at 400 °F for 10-15 minutes, or just until hot and slightly puffy. Top each serving with the grilled nectarines or mangoes and sprinkle with the grated orange peel. Serve immediately.

Serves 12

Citrus-Almond "Ricotta" Filling

By Bryanna Clark Grogan

Almond "Ricotta":

1 cup hot water

1/2 cup whole blanched almonds

1 cup cold water

4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

4 tablespoons cornstarch (if you're allergic to corn, you can use wheat starch, or use 6 T. white rice flour)

1 teaspoon maple syrup or agave nectar

1/2 teaspoon salt

Additions to add after chilling:

1/4 cup vegan sugar

2 tablespoons lime juice

grated zest of 1 large organic orange or blood orange

chopped peeled fruit of the orange or blood orange

grated zest of 1 organic large lemon

Place the hot water and almonds in the blender and blend until a very smooth "cream" results-- be patient. It cannot be grainy. Add the rest of the ingredients and blend again well.

Pour the mixture into a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan and stir constantly over medium-high heat until it thickens and comes to a boil. Turn the heat down to medium and cook 1 minute more, stirring.

MICROWAVE OPTION: Pour the mixture into a large microwave-safe bowl or beaker. Microwave 2 minutes on HIGH. Whisk. Microwave 1 to 2 minutes more, or until thickened.

Scrape the mixture into a container. Cover and chill. When it is chilled and firm, mash and stir it with a fork. Mix in the additions with a fork. Refrigerate until you fill the crepes.

Mary's Note: Bryanna made these in my Berndes and Swiss Diamond non-stick frying pans for the Celebrity

Chef weekend and she was so impressed with how well they loosened from the pans that when she returned home she ordered some of these pans for herself. These crepes were very tender and delicious. They would be very impressive to serve to guests!