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People Passionate About Starches Are Healthy and Beautiful

My wife, Mary, and I were enjoying steamed sweet corn (vegan) tamales with a side dish of black beans served to us at a bayside table at Guaymas Mexican/Seafood restaurant in Tiburon, a small town located a few miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. At an inside table next to us sat three plump women, their short sleeves revealing upper arms almost as big as my thighs. They were elegantly dressed and from their speech I knew they were well educated. During the course of our meal I watched all three of them at various times hobble with painstaking efforts from their table to the restroom and back.

A light seaward breeze carried the smells from their clams, shrimp, and vegetables—all deep-fried in fat—over our table, spoiling our meal. I looked at Mary and thought, “these women are at least a decade younger than you are and all three are physically disabled.” For what pleasure? Food? PAGE 2

Urgent: Support the Proposed New Law in California Requiring Doctors to Provide Patients with Information on Diabetes and Heart Disease

Patients often receive inadequate and/or incorrect information from their doctors on diabetes and heart disease. For example, on heart disease, inadequate information is received on these three important issues:

- 1) They are told surgery (angioplasty and bypass) for chronic coronary artery disease is usually lifesaving, when the scientific research says otherwise.
- 2) They receive almost no education about the role of the rich Western diet in the cause of coronary artery disease and about the right way to eat to prevent it.
- 3) They are rarely told that changing to a healthy, low-fat, plant-food based diet will relieve symptoms of heart disease, including chest pain, and reverse the underlying disease. PAGE 7

Report on the February 2009 Costa Rica Trip

We had another highly successful adventure to Costa Rica. I have provided links below for pictures and comments about this trip. PAGE 12

Featured Recipes

- Chili Rellenos
- Garlic Mashed Potatoes
- Tofu Sour Cream
- Mango Salsa
- Ola's Chile Rellenos
- Quinoa Corn Bread
- Balsamic Vinaigrette
- Chilean Porotos Granados
- Barbecue Portobello Sandwiches

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A light seaward breeze carried the smells from their clams, shrimp, and vegetables—all deep-fried in fat—over our table, spoiling our meal. I looked at Mary and thought, “these women are at least a decade younger than you are and all three are physically disabled.” For what pleasure? Food? It was all I could do to keep myself from asking them to try some of my tamale, or at least a bite of my black beans, and hand them a business card. I looked across our table and whispered to Mary, “Thank you.” She had no idea that I was telling her how happy she made me, and that some of my happiness came from enjoying the sight of a beautiful woman radiating health.

Where have all the pretty women and handsome men gone? Over to the dark-side of dining. Good-looking people who care enough about themselves to enhance their attractiveness by spending thousands of dollars on clothes, cars, makeup, perfumes, and plastic surgery have become unsightly—sacrificing themselves for yellow and brown food that tastes of grease and salt, and smells repugnant (in my opinion). Lives are ruined by food, to the same degree, as are the lives of a smoker, alcoholic, or narcotics addict destroyed by their misguided choices. Too few people know that for free, they can have all the health that money can’t buy.

Health Is Attractive

I learned the facts of life from my father many years ago. We were close and discussed all matters frankly. Walking down a busy street one day he noticed my eyes drawn to many of the young women passing by. He said, “The reason you find some of these girls especially attractive is because they look healthy.” My hormone-fueled boyish response was, “That’s not what I am looking at Dad.” It took me many years before I understood how right he was. Health is attractive, by natural design, for the preservation of the species. Sexually, we are drawn to healthy people, because those are the ones that we want to mate—to share our genetic material—with. This character of human nature enhances the chances that a loving relationship between man and woman will result in the highest quality offspring. Overweight, and even more so obesity, is a glaring sign of malnutrition and poor health.

In platonic relationships health is also a magnet that pulls people together. In times past, villages of people depended upon the strengths of their individual members in order to survive. Physically fit people could hunt, gather, and defend for the sake of all members in the community. The sick were a burden, and often banished. These same principles transfer to the business world of today. Appearing healthy means you are more likely to add to the common goals of the company. Hearty employees work harder, for longer hours, more cleverly, and more efficiently—they are valuable contributors. Good health radiates your worth to others, resulting in personal advancement.

The Truth Is Simple and Easy to Explain

Most people are completely backwards about the diet that results in health and an attractive appearance. They learn, “Don’t eat starches, because rice turns to sugar, which turns to fat, making you gain weight.” If this mantra were true then there would be an epidemic of obesity among the 1.73 billion Asians living on rice-based diets. Confirming this truth, after moving west and replacing their starch with “high-protein” foods, then people from Japan and the Philippines would become trimmer and healthier

looking. Is that what you see? "Potatoes are fattening." If true, then why during the 2000 McDougall Adventure trip to Peru, a country where common potatoes are the staple food, were the residents so trim and strong looking? We did see a few overweight people on this trip. The "chubby ones" were the waiters and chefs serving tourists their favorite meat and cheese dishes, and obviously sampling the menu.

Let's look together at a globe of the Earth and identify the populations of people who look the youngest, healthiest, and trimmest. Those living in Japan, China, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines stand out. Their diet is mostly rice with some vegetables. In rural Mexico we will find beautiful people eating corn, beans, and squash. No one is overweight or on a diet there. The men, women and children of central New Guinea are nourished almost entirely by sweet potatoes. These people have no need for Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig. Worldwide, populations with the highest consumption of starch are the trimmest and fittest.¹ Learn about the health of these trim people and you will discover that they also have extremely low rates of diabetes, arthritis, gallbladder disease, constipation, indigestion, multiple sclerosis, heart disease, and cancers of the breast, prostate, and colon.

Starches Generate Fitness

The basic metabolism of the body is genetically encoded to run most efficiently on starches, and no amount of willpower, dieting, or wishful thinking will ever change the fundamentals of our internal workings. The one big simple solution to health and beauty is to eat the diet we were designed for—a starch-based diet.

Starches Are Appetite Satisfying.

The hunger drive keeps you and the whole human race alive. You will not fool your hunger drive by pushing yourself away from the table, putting your fork down between bites, eating from a small plate, or counting calories. It will always hurt to be hungry and you can never train yourself to not feel that pain, even if you practice until you are 90 years old. So give in and eat, you must satisfy this basic survival need. The control you do have is the composition of the foods that are on your plate. Choose wisely. Meat, dairy, and oils for meals will mean overweight and sickness. Starches, vegetables, and fruits will mean a trim fit body and lifetime of excellent health.

You may have heard that "all calories are the same when it comes to body weight." This is incorrect, especially in terms of efficiency of appetite satisfaction and ease of fat accumulation. Three substances—protein, fat, and carbohydrate—can provide fuel for the body, measured as calories. Starches, like corn, beans, potatoes, and rice, are abundant in carbohydrates, dietary fiber, and are very low in fat. Appetite satisfaction begins with physically filling the stomach. Compared to cheese (4 calories per gram), meat (4 calories per gram), and oils (9 calories per gram), starches, at only one calorie per gram, are very calorie dilute. In the simplest terms, starches physically will fill you up with a fraction—one-fourth—of the calories as will cheese, meat, and oil.² Furthermore, research comparing the impact of eating carbohydrates and fats on the appeasement of our appetite shows carbohydrates lead to long-term satiety, enduring for hours between meals; whereas the fats in a meal have little impact on satiety—people are left wanting more food when they eat fats and oils.^{3,4}

My early eating experiences taught me this lesson well. Before I understood the importance of starch-centered meals my diet consisted of red meat (no carbohydrates), chicken (no carbohydrates), fish (no carbohydrates), cheese (2% carbohydrates), and animal fats and vegetable oils (no carbohydrates). After finishing my first full plate of these foods I was still starving. My second plate left me with a sense of physical fullness in my abdomen, but still very hungry. After my third plate of carbohydrate-deficient foods I received two signals that the time had come to stop eating—I felt overstuffed and in pain. But I remember thinking, because I was still not satisfied, that "if I had room, I would like to stuff into my stomach one more pork chop." At times I wondered if I had emotional issues with food because I was never content. Maybe I was a compulsive overeater? Fortunately, my "mental illness," my compulsiveness, was completely cured once I began eating sufficient amounts of appetite-satisfying carbohydrates, plentiful in starches.

Excess Starch Does Not Turn to Body Fat

A widely held belief is that the sugars in starches are readily converted into fat and then stored unattractively in the abdomen, hips, and buttock. Incorrect! And there is no disagreement about the truth among scientists or their published scientific research.⁵⁻¹³ After eating, the complex carbohydrates found in starches, such as rice, are digested into simple sugars in the intestine and then absorbed into the bloodstream where they are transported to trillions of cells in the body in order to provide for energy. Carbohydrates (sugars) consumed in excess of the body's daily needs can be stored (invisibly) as glycogen in the muscles and liver. The total storage capacity for glycogen is about two pounds. Carbohydrates consumed in excess of our need and beyond our limited storage capacity are not readily stored as body fat. Instead, these excess carbohydrate calories are burned off as heat (a process known as facultative dietary thermogenesis) or used in physical movements not associated with exercise.^{9,13}

The process of turning sugars into fats is known as de novo lipogenesis. Some animals, such as pigs and cows, can efficiently convert the low-energy, inexpensive carbohydrates found in grains and grasses into calorie-dense fats.⁵ This metabolic efficiency makes pigs and cows ideal "food animals." Bees also perform de novo lipogenesis; converting honey (simple carbohydrates) into wax (fats). However, human beings are very inefficient at this process and as a result de novo lipogenesis does not occur under usual living conditions in people.⁵⁻¹³ When, during extreme conditions, de novo lipogenesis does occur the metabolic cost is about 30% of the calories consumed—a very wasteful process.¹¹

Under experimental laboratory conditions overfeeding of large amounts of simple sugars to subjects will result in a little bit of de novo lipogenesis. For example, trim and obese women were overfed 50% more total calories than they usually ate in a day, along with an extra 3.5 ounces (135 grams) of refined sugar. From this overfeeding the women produced less than 4 grams (36 calories) of fat daily, which means a person would have to be overfed by this amount of extra calories and sugar every day for nearly 4 months in order to gain one extra pound of body fat.¹⁰ Obviously, even overeating substantial quantities of refined and processed carbohydrates is a relatively unimportant source of body fat. So where does all that belly fat come from? The fat you eat is the fat you wear.

Fat Is the Metabolic Dollar Saved for the Next Famine

After eating, dietary fat (from lard, butter, meat, cheese, nuts, olive oil, etc.) is absorbed from the intestine into the bloodstream and transported to the millions of cells designed for storage—the body fat (adipose) cells. The metabolic cost for this transfer is relatively inexpensive (3% of the calories consumed).¹¹ No pricey chemical conversion is required, so this is a routine metabolic movement after every typical meal. When samples of a person's body fat tissue are chemically analyzed the results reveal the kinds of fats which that person commonly eats.¹⁴⁻¹⁷ For example, the consumption of margarine and shortening results in high proportions of "trans" fats in a person's fatty tissues. A diet with large amounts of cold-water marine fish means omega-3 fats are deposited and stored in the body fat. The saying "from my lips to my hips" expresses the real life effects of the fat-laden Western diet. Fortunately, starches contain very little fat for us to wear.

Starches Cause Us to Radiate Vitality

Weight loss is accomplished every year by thousands of people by methods that don't necessarily promote health and commonly cause illness. The best example of this is the low-carbohydrate, Atkins-type approaches that have been so popular in the recent past. These diets work by severe carbohydrate deprivation, which causes a state of illness (with the hallmark of ketosis). When people become sick they lose their appetite and thereby lose weight. This method for losing extra pounds is analogous to the weight loss seen in people taking cancer chemotherapy drugs.¹⁸ To the careful observer, people following low-carbohydrate diets look and act sick.

A starch-based diet results in loss of excess body fat, and as desirable, radiant health. Winning endur-

ance athletes know well the benefits of “carbohydrate loading.” In addition to achieving peak performance, following a starch-based diet improves blood flow to all tissues. The skin glows from improved circulation. A clear complexion is also a welcome byproduct from the low-fat nature of starches—no more oily skin, blackheads, whiteheads, and acne. From the weight loss and the relief of arthritis, people become more active and agile, like when they were much younger. The key to gaining all these benefits is accomplished solely by changing the composition of the foods on your plate—but that’s easier said, than done.

Moderation Is Impossible for Passionate People

My great grandmother, Laura Bristow lived to be 106 years old eating a “well-balanced diet.” I recall her telling me, when I was a child, “Johnny, you eat too much meat; it’s going to make you sick.” Years later—I was 30 and she was 102—I had become, in all practical terms, a strict vegetarian. One afternoon at her home in the suburbs of Detroit she asked me to drive to the neighborhood McDonald’s and buy her a hamburger—a 30 cent burger, made with paper thin ground beef, two pickle slices and a blob of mustard and ketchup, all hidden within two halves of an airy white bread bun. Upon my return she proceeded to cut the hamburger into quarters and she shook one quarter in my face and advised me, “If you ate a little more meat you would be healthier.” She then ate two quarters and put the rest away for later. My great-grandmother was by nature a very moderate person who picked at tiny platefuls of traditional American foods, drank ¼ cup of diluted coffee each morning, and had one small glass of red wine on holidays. I am not like her.

I am not a restrained person and neither are most of my patients. In my youth I started the day with several mugs of strong coffee, I frequented all-you-can eat buffets and fast food restaurants, I smoked two packages of Marlboros daily, and too often unwound at the end of my stress-filled day with a whiskey or two. (I also paid a big price for this excessive behavior with a cholesterol level of 335 mg/dl, 50 pounds of excess body fat, major abdominal surgery, and a debilitating stroke, all before the age of 25 years.) I realize most people are not as wicked as I was, but on the other hand most people I know allow at least one of these overindulgences in their lives—and that one extravagance is usually unending forkfuls of rich foods. For people like us, attempts at moderation result in continued dependence and recurring failures.

“Everything in moderation” has been preached to every generation throughout human history. It didn’t work way back then and it doesn’t work for most folks today. Have you ever met a smoker who quit by cutting down? I haven’t. Have you ever heard of an alcoholic who sobered up by switching to beer? Neither have I. Westerners are completely addicted to their steaks, cheeses, and pies. Don’t tease them with a little bit. Cutting down on the portion size of fried chicken, gravy, biscuits, and ice cream is slow torture and is one of the primary reasons diets fail.

William Lloyd Garrison (1805 – 1879), known for his anti-slavery activities, clearly understood the shortcomings of moderation, “Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; but urge me not to use moderation.” The startling observation that almost all people living in Western societies are fat and/or sick with diseases which will wreck and shorten their lives, should have health professionals up in arms, demanding an immediate and complete end to this senseless suffering—regardless of the expense and effort. But, for some unexplainable reason, the loss of a father or a husband to a heart attack, the disfigurement of a mother by breast cancer surgery, and the blinding of a friend from diabetes are accepted consequences for our birthright to eat like aristocrats. To mitigate these food-induced tragedies we are told to eat a little less of the same.

Throughout my entire life I have been enthusiastic about everything—my schoolwork, my hobbies, my sports, the whole lot of life. I was born this way, and scientific research establishes the fact that like the color of our eyes and hair, our personality traits are determined in part by complex genetics.^{19,20} Early life experiences fostered my exuberant nature. So now, even if I wanted to, I could not become a “moderate person.” Still, I love life and do not want my high-spirited personality to kill me,

as it almost did in my youth. So I have found the solution.

I now direct my energies towards supportive, not destructive, behaviors. I have learned to love healthy foods—I eat them without reservation. Windsurfing is my passion. I eagerly look forward to long walks with my youngest grandson carried in a backpack. I spend a little extra money to indulge myself with bottled pure water. My favorite drink is herbal tea—and I do drink a lot of it. I fill my lungs with fresh air cleaned by an air purifier. I passionately pursue every “good thing” in my life. Irish poet and dramatist, Oscar Wilde said: “Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess.” I encourage you to take these words to heart and live life enthusiastically and focused on health-supporting behaviors.

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Urgent: Support the Proposed New Law in California Requiring Doctors to Provide Patients with Information on Diabetes and Heart Disease

Patients often receive inadequate and/or incorrect information from their doctors on diabetes and heart disease. For example, on heart disease, inadequate information is received on these three important issues:

- 1) They are told surgery (angioplasty and bypass) for chronic coronary artery disease is usually lifesaving, when the scientific research says otherwise.
- 2) They receive almost no education about the role of the rich Western diet in the cause of coronary artery disease and about the right way to eat to prevent it.
- 3) They are rarely told that changing to a healthy, low-fat, plant-food based diet will relieve symptoms of heart disease, including chest pain, and reverse the underlying disease.

Assembly [Bill 1478](#) has been introduced by California state assembly member Tom Ammiano, representing the 13th District, to require that a physician obtain a patient's written acknowledgment confirming the receipt of information, as specified, regarding treatment through medical nutrition therapy prior to delivering nonemergency treatment for heart disease. My supporting letter on this matter is provided below. Next month's newsletter will have a similar letter from me about diabetes treatment and a request for your support.

Please send letters to members of the Business & Professions Committee (who are initially reviewing this bill) asking them for their support of AB 1478. A sample letter is provided at the end of this article. Here are their e-mail addresses:

B&P consultants to the Assembly member:

For Hayashi: cory.jasperson@asm.ca.gov

For Emmerson: Teresa.trujillo@asm.ca.gov

For Conway: leigh.carter@asm.ca.gov

For Eng: jonathan.tran@asm.ca.gov

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For Smyth: sean.hoffman@asm.ca.gov

My Letter of Support for AB 1492:**Requirement to Inform Patients in Writing about the Limitations of Heart Surgery (CABG and angioplasty) and the Benefits of Nutritional Therapies for Heart Disease****The Patients' Right to Informed Consent**

Informed consent is a patient right guaranteed by the bylaws of most hospitals. California law requires that a patient's consent be obtained in writing for several specific procedures and treatments, including: sterilizations, hysterectomy, breast cancer, prostate cancer, gynecological cancers, psychosurgery, and electroconvulsive therapy, but not for heart surgery.^{1c} California patients with heart disease need to be informed in writing about the lack of benefits and the real harms of current therapies with bypass surgery and angioplasty. They also need to be told that the cause of their heart disease is the rich Western diet, and that their condition is reversible with a change in diet, exercise, and judicious use of inexpensive medications.

Heart Surgery for Coronary Artery Disease

Disease of the arteries supplying the heart muscle (called atherosclerosis) affects the majority of the adult population of California. According to the American Heart Association 16,800,000 people alive today in the US have a history of heart attack, angina pectoris or both.^{1a} The cause of this disease is well recognized as due to the meat- and dairy-centered Western diet.

Faced with pictures of the shadows of blockages in their coronary arteries (angiogram x-rays), nearly two million people in the US annually undergo heart surgeries, most patients believing that these procedures will prevent heart attacks and prolong their lives. Coronary revascularization by coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) and angioplasty (percutaneous coronary intervention or PCI) are among the most common major medical procedures performed in North America and Europe. In the US in 2006 there were about 1.314 million angioplasties and 448,000 bypass operations performed.^{1b} Many hospitals derive 80% of their income from the treatment of heart disease. The average total healthcare cost after five years is \$100,522 for bypass surgery and \$81,790 for angioplasty per patient.¹

Heart Surgery Lacks Benefits for Survival, Heart Attack Prevention, or Quality of Life

More than 28 studies have been done to try to determine real life benefits from heart surgery for people with chronic blockages of their heart arteries. Results of angioplasty have consistently shown no survival or heart attack prevention benefits over standard medical care. Studies, all performed before 1990, showed a small survival benefit in highly selected small subgroups for bypass surgery (approximately 3%) over medical therapy.

Two recent studies, the OAT (Occluded Artery Trial) and COURAGE (Clinical Outcomes Utilizing Revascularization and Aggressive Drug Evaluation) studies have been especially revealing about the failures of angioplasty. The conclusion of the OAT study of 2166 patients treated with angioplasty and medications or medications alone was: "PCI did not reduce the occurrence of death, reinfarction, or heart failure, and there was a trend toward excess reinfarction during 4 years of follow-up in stable patients with occlusion of the infarct-related artery 3 to 28 days after myocardial infarction."^{2,3} The most recent follow up of the OAT study found at 2 years medical therapy was less expensive with better survival than angioplasty.⁴ The conclusion of the COURAGE study of 2287 patients was, "As an initial management strategy in patients with stable coronary artery disease, PCI did not reduce the risk of death, myocardial infarction, or other major cardiovascular events when added to optimal medical therapy."⁵

A recent analysis of 28 studies comparing heart surgery with medical therapy, performed by doctors with a vested interest, cardiologists and bypass surgeons, found less than a 2% absolute improvement in survival achieved from heart surgery over no operation.⁶ And for the most part these major treatments continue to be performed without any questioning by the patients, their doctors, their health insurance providers, and anyone from the government of California.

More >>>

My Letter of Support for AB 1492 continued:

Surgical Interventions Fail to Treat Killer Lesions

Doctors understand why heart surgeries do not save lives. The aim of heart surgery is to by pass around (bypass surgery) or rupture (angioplasty) hard, stable, large plaques found inside the heart arteries. However, these plaques are not the ones that cause heart attacks or death. A heart attack occurs when a small volatile plaque, better pictured as a tiny festering sore, located on the inside of an artery ruptures and causes the blood to suddenly form a clot (thrombus).^{5,7,8} The event is known as a coronary artery thrombosis, or a heart attack. The reason lives are not saved by bypass surgery and angioplasty is these surgeries completely ignore the dangerous part of the artery disease, the tiny volatile plaques (sores).

Inexpensive Diet-therapy and/or Medications Reverse Heart Disease

Beginning in the 1950s investigators from the University of Pennsylvania treated their heart patients with a low-fat diet and obtained excellent relief of chest pain (angina) in only a few days.⁹⁻¹² In 1983 results published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed a healthy diet and lifestyle could cause a 91.0% mean reduction in frequency of chest pain episodes in less than 3 weeks.¹³ Chest pain (angina) is the primary legitimate reason for recommending surgery. The next level of benefit from dietary therapy was established when a healthy diet was found to reverse the underlying disease (atherosclerosis) in 82% of patients in one year.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ The addition of cholesterol lowering medications and aspirin offers further advantages for heart patients.¹⁷

Cost Savings to the State of California

Actual figures for the number of heart surgeries for California are not available. However, assuming California has one-tenth the population of the United States, then extrapolated figures for heart surgery (131,400 angioplasties and 44,800 bypass surgeries) performed annually can be made using the average total healthcare cost after five years of \$100,522 for bypass surgery and \$81,790 for angioplasty per patient.

This extrapolation suggests the potential for savings is nearly \$11 billion for angioplasty surgeries and \$5 billion for bypass surgery annually—money spent every year, over the next 5 years after the procedure.

By comparison diet-therapy can be taught with outpatient classes for a few hundred dollars. Intensive medically supervised live-in programs are also available for between \$2000 and \$4000. A cost-benefit analysis published in the October-December 2006 issue of the University of California's *California Agriculture* journal has determined that every dollar spent on nutrition education in California saves between \$3.67 and \$8.34 in future medical costs.¹⁸

Sample Letter to Assembly Member

Dear Assembly Member (their name):

I am writing to ask you to vote for AB 1478. Chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes are epidemic in America and California. From my personal experience I know that while drug medication can be of value in emergency situations, drugs ultimately never cure the disease – they only suppress the symptoms of the disease. This is an expensive way to treat diseases. Our state cannot anymore afford the high cost of treating patients with drugs and surgery alone. Diet and lifestyle changes have been found to be helpful in arresting and even curing heart disease and diabetes, and is very inexpensive compared to drugs and surgery. I feel doctors should give their patients the option to be referred out for diet or nutrition therapy for their non-emergency heart disease or diabetic condition.

Thank you very much for your support for AB 1478.

Sincerely,

Your name, address, and e-mail

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Report on the February 2009 Costa Rica Trip



We had another highly successful adventure to Costa Rica. I have provided links below for pictures and comments about this trip.

Please join us for the July 8 to 15, 2009 McDougall Adventure trip to Costa Rica. More [Information](#) is found on my web site.

Or call (800) 941-7111 or (616) 874-8155

[Photos and Comments](#) about the February 2009 adventure.



Featured Recipes



Chile Rellenos

Several years ago John and I had dinner at a restaurant called Los Adobes in Todos Santos, Mexico. Meals are served in a beautiful garden setting with meandering walkways lined with cactus plants. They specialize in using poblano chilies and although most of their dishes contain meat, seafood or cheese, their vegetarian Chile Relleno was stuffed with mashed potatoes and covered with a bean sauce. I had an interesting conversation with the chef in my limited Spanish. This is my version of the recipe. This takes a bit of effort to put together, but the results are worth it. If you have some leftover mashed potatoes, it will save you some time.

Preparation Time: 1 hour

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 2-4

4 large poblano chili peppers

2 cups garlic mashed potatoes (recipe below)

1 ½ cups fat-free refried pinto beans

½ cup tofu sour cream (recipe below)

¼ cup water

¼ teaspoon chipotle chili powder

Preheat broiler. Lay chilies in a single layer on a dry baking sheet. Broil about 4 inches from broiler until chilies are blistering and charred on all sides, turning frequently. This will take about 15 minutes. Put chilies in a large metal bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let sit for 15 minutes. Remove skins with your hands, rubbing with a paper towel, if necessary. Set aside on paper towels to dry.

Place the beans, tofu sour cream, water and chipotle powder in a small saucepan and heat gently until warmed, stirring frequently. Do not boil. Place about 1 cup of this mixture in the bottom of a medium baking dish.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Cut a slit down the side of each poblano and carefully remove the seeds. You may leave the stem on for presentation, if desired, otherwise remove it along with the seeds.

Stuff the poblanos with about ½ cup of mashed potatoes each. Close the poblanos and place in the baking dish. Drizzle with about 1 more cup of the sauce. Cover and bake for 20 minutes, uncover and bake about 10 more minutes. Serve with the remaining bean sauce and Mango salsa to spoon over the top, if desired.

Hints: Depending on what else you are serving for dinner, each person may eat either 1 or 2 of these stuffed peppers, hence the 2-4 serving suggestion. Use 1 can of fat-free refried pinto beans if you do not have left-over smashed beans in your refrigerator. Fat-free black refried beans can be used instead of the pintos with delicious results. Prepared Mango salsa is available in some markets and will cut down on the preparation time. Purchased fresh tomato salsa may be used instead of the Mango salsa, if desired. Poblano chili peppers are dark green, rich flavored mild peppers. They are usually about 2 ½ to 3 inches wide and 4 to 5 inches long, tapering from top to bottom in a triangle. Poblanos may also be charred over a gas or electric burner until the skins are well blistered (use tongs for this). This will take a bit longer because they have to be done individually. The peppers can be placed in a brown paper bag to cool, instead of in a bowl, if desired. Cooling the peppers in a covered bowl or bag helps to loosen the skin, making them easier to peel.

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Servings: makes 2 cups

4 large Yukon Gold potatoes

2 cloves garlic

¼ cup unsweetened soy milk

Several twists freshly ground white pepper

Dash sea salt

Peel potatoes and chop into chunks. Place in a stainless pan with water to cover. Add 2 whole cloves of peeled garlic. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and cook for 15 minutes until potatoes are tender. Drain. Mash in pan using electric beaters or use a hand masher, adding the remaining ingredients as necessary to get a smooth consistency and delicious flavor.

Tofu Sour Cream

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Chilling Time: 2 hours

Servings: Makes 1 ½ cups

1 12.3 ounce package soft silken tofu

2 ½ tablespoons lemon juice

2 ½ teaspoons sugar
dash salt

Combine all ingredients in a food processor and process until smooth. Refrigerate at least 2 hours to allow flavors to blend.

Mango Salsa

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Servings: makes 2 cups

2 cups peeled, chopped, ripe mango
½ cup finely chopped onion
½ cup finely chopped red bell pepper
1 fresh jalapeno, seeded and finely chopped
¼ cup chopped cilantro
¼ teaspoon minced fresh garlic
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon warm water
several twists freshly ground black pepper
dash salt

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Cover and chill at least 1 hour before serving.

Ola's Chile Rellenos

By Ola Ellman

Ola and I were talking about potato-filled Chile Rellenos during the last McDougall Advanced Study Weekend and she told me about her recipe for easy and healthy Chile Rellenos. I made these last week when I was perfecting the Chile Relleno recipe above and served them side by side. They are delicious, with a completely different taste because of the squash and sauce choice. Again, they are a bit labor intensive, but worth the trouble if you have the time. Use leftover mashed potatoes, if possible, to save time.

Preparation Time: 1 hour

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 2-4

4 large poblano chili peppers
1 cup mashed potatoes
1 cup roasted, mashed butternut squash (see hints below)
1 ½ cups Mexican green sauce (see hints below)
¼ teaspoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons chopped onion

Char and skin the poblano chilies. Preheat broiler. Lay chilies in a single layer on a dry baking sheet. Broil about 4 inches from broiler until chilies are blistering and charred on all sides, turning frequently. This will take about 15 minutes. Put chilies in a large metal bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let sit for 15 minutes. Remove skins with your hands, rubbing with a paper towel, if necessary. Set aside on paper towels to dry. Or use method below in hints.

Combine the mashed potatoes with the mashed squash. Stir in the cumin.

Pour about ¾ cup of the green sauce in the bottom of a medium baking dish.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Cut a slit down the side of each poblano and carefully remove the seeds. You may leave the stem on for presentation, if desired, otherwise remove it along with the seeds.

Stuff the poblanos with about ½ cup of mashed potatoes and squash mixture in each. Sprinkle with some of the chopped onion in each chili. Close the poblanos and place in the baking dish. Drizzle with about ¾ cup more of the sauce. Cover and bake for 20 minutes, uncover and bake about 10 more minutes.

Hints: Poblanos may also be charred over a gas or electric burner until the skins are well blistered (use tongs for this). This will take a bit longer because they have to be done individually. The peppers can be placed in a brown paper bag to cool, instead of in a bowl, if desired. Cooling the peppers in a covered bowl or bag helps to loosen the skin, making them easier to peel. To roast a butternut squash, cut it in half lengthwise, remove the seeds, place cut side down on a baking dish and roast at 400 degrees until done, about 45 minutes. Puncture with a fork to check tenderness. The skin should be browned and flesh tender. Cool and scoop out flesh. Mash with fork. Save 1 cup of the mashed squash for use in this recipe. Reserve remaining squash for another use, or freeze and use much later. Look for a fat-free Mexican green sauce in the Ethnic section of your supermarket. I used a jarred green tomatillo salsa that was very flavorful, but not too spicy.

Quinoa Corn Bread

By Cathy Fisher

Cathy works with the McDougall's and oversees the website's audio McDougallCasts. She also greets and registers attendees of the Weekend Expos and 10-Day Programs. She developed this recipe as an alternative to corn bread recipes that use oil and eggs. She used the banana instead of the oil, which provides a nice moist texture. The quinoa also provides moisture (quinoa can be found in the bulk food section of health food stores, like Whole Foods). You can also omit the maple syrup if you're trying to avoid sugar; the corn kernels provide some sweetness on their own (canned corn can be used in a pinch, but it's not as good as fresh). You can use either yellow or blue cornmeal (but blue turns your cornbread into a conversation piece, so be ready).

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 25-30 minutes

Servings: makes one 8x8 pan

1 cup water

1/2 cup dry quinoa

1 cup cornmeal

1/2 cup whole wheat flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Fresh corn kernels cut from 1 ear (about 1/2 cup)

½ of a ripe banana

¾ cup soy milk

¼ cup maple syrup (or agave nectar)

Egg Replacer for 2 eggs (3 teaspoons Egg Replacer and 4 tablespoons warm water whisked together till frothy)

Start by cooking the quinoa: boil 1 cup water, then add in the dry quinoa, reduce to a simmer, and cover and cook for 15-20 minutes until the water is gone and the quinoa is puffed up. Set aside while preparing the remaining ingredients. Combine the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl, followed by the corn kernels. Separately, mash the banana well, then add in the soy milk, maple syrup (or agave), and Egg Replacer mixture. Next, combine wet and dry ingredients. Last, fold in the cooked quinoa. The mixture will be somewhat thick. Spread into a prepared 8x8-inch square pan and bake at 350 for 25-30 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes before cutting.

Hints: Egg Replacer is made by EnerG Foods and can be found in most natural food stores.

Balsamic Vinaigrette

By Joyce Everett, chef at Flamingo Resort Hotel

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Chilling Time: 1 hour

Servings: makes 2 ½ cups

1 cup balsamic vinegar
1 cup cold water
½ cup Agave nectar or honey
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic

Combine all ingredients in a blender jar and process until well blended.

Chill before serving.

Chilean Porotos Granados

When John and I traveled in Chile several years ago, we had a difficult time finding good low-fat plant food dishes in many of the areas that we visited. There was one exception, a delicious bean and squash stew that we ate on several occasions.

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 8

4 cups water
3 cups peeled and chunked butternut squash
4 cups fresh corn kernels (6 ears corn)
1 onion, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1-2 jalapenos, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/8 cup vegetable broth
2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon oregano
2 15 ounce cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
1 tomato, chopped
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
Hot pepper sauce to taste
Several twists of freshly ground pepper
Dash sea salt

Place the water in a large pot with the squash and corn kernels. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and cook for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, place the onion, bell peppers, jalapenos and garlic in a sauté pan with the broth. Cook, stirring frequently until vegetables soften and begin to stick to the bottom of the pan. Add the paprika, cumin and oregano, continue to cook and stir for about one minute. Set aside.

Place 1 cup of the beans in a blender jar. Add ¼ cup of the basil and 3 cups of the squash-corn mixture and blend until fairly smooth. Return to pot and add the remaining beans. Scrape the vegetable mixture into the pot along with any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the tomato, red pepper flakes and the remaining basil. Heat through. Taste and add hot pepper sauce, several twists of freshly ground pepper and a dash of sea salt, if desired.

Hints: In Chile this stew is traditionally made with cranberry beans. I used canned pinto beans to save some time. If you can find fresh cranberry beans at your local farmer's market, buy them and cook until tender, then use in this recipe. You will need about 3 cups of cooked beans.

Barbecue Portobello Sandwiches

These sandwiches remind some people of pulled pork, but since I have never eaten a pulled pork sandwich you couldn't prove it by me. They are still great though, no matter what you call them. We like these topped with a variety of garnishes. If I have some coleslaw in the refrigerator, we'll use that, plus some tomatoes, sliced onions and lettuce. (Shredded cabbage tossed with rice vinegar and lime juice makes a delicious stand in for coleslaw.) Or try them topped with sauerkraut and mustard.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Servings: 6

1 cup fat-free barbecue sauce
1 chipotle chile in adobo sauce, minced
1 onion, chopped
3 large Portobello mushrooms, stems and gills removed, chopped
6 whole wheat buns

Place the barbecue sauce in a bowl. Add the minced chipotle and mix well. Set aside.

Place the onions and mushrooms in a large non-stick sauté pan. Cook over medium high heat for about 10 minutes, stirring almost constantly with a spatula to keep the vegetables from sticking to the pan. The onions and mushrooms will take on a golden brown color. Pour the barbecue sauce over the onions and mushrooms and mix well. Reduce heat to low and cook gently, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Split the buns and warm them, ladle the barbecue mixture over the buns. Top with your choice of garnishes. Serve open-face or close up the buns and eat the sandwiches with your hands.