**Cooking around the World: The Mighty Squash**

**BLACK BEAN AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH CHILI**

Adapted from http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/black-bean-squash-chili

*Chili is one dish that’s marvelously amenable to the chef’s taste, so feel free to play with the ingredients according to what you like and what you have on hand. This has become one of our family’s favorite hearty, cozy meals. Also, in addition to being delicious and good for you, winter squash and dried beans are some of the most economical foods out there, so if you want autumnal bliss on a budget, this recipe is for you!*

**Ingredients:**

1/4 cup olive oil (or less)

3 onions, chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped

1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped

2 jalapeños, seeded and minced

Four 15-oz. cans black beans, rinsed and drained (or 3 cups dried beans, cooked)\*

Two 14.5-oz. cans diced fire-roasted tomatoes (regular old tomatoes work fine, too, or you can use about 4 cups fresh tomatoes)

3 tablespoons chili powder

2 tablespoons cumin

1 tablespoon dried oregano, or about 3 tablespoons fresh

4 cups butternut squash (about 2 lb.), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1/2-inch dice

Salt and pepper

**Method:**

1. Warm oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté onions until tender, about 3 minutes. Add garlic; sauté 1 minute. Add bell peppers and jalapeños; sauté until tender, about 3 minutes.

2. Transfer pepper mixture to slow cooker. Stir in beans, tomatoes, chili powder, cumin, and oregano. Arrange squash on top. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Squash should be melt-in-your-mouth tender.

3. Season chili with salt and pepper and stir to combine everything.

4. This is really nice served with cornbread and a dollop of sour cream (and some hot sauce for those who like an extra kick!).

\*I like to use dried beans because it’s economical, and because buying dried in bulk uses fewer resources in transportation and results in less waste. But then I’m faced with the question of how to convert canned amounts to equivalent of dried & cooked? Here’s a rule of thumb (thanks to Daniel Gritzer of seriouseats.com): Most dried beans slightly more than double in both volume andweight once cooked. A 15-oz can contains approximately 1.5 cups or 9 oz beans. So for one 15-oz can, you can cook ¾ cup (4.5 oz) of the dried version and come out about right. If there are a few extra beans, use them in something else, or just throw them in!

**CHEESY SPAGHETTI SQUASH NESTS**

Feel free to experiment with the kinds of cheese and seasonings in these (what about sesame oil, sesame seeds, seaweed, and Korean red pepper flakes? Maybe even finely chopped kimchee?). I bet a fried version of this would be pretty great (if less healthy).

Makes about 48

**Ingredients:**

2 small spaghetti squash (about 4 pounds)

8oz shredded mozzarella, about 1 cup

6oz parmesan cheese, about ¾ cup

1 egg, beaten

½ teaspoon garlic powder (or 2-3 cloves fresh garlic, crushed/minced)

½ teaspoon dried oregano (or 1 ½ tsp fresh)

¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon pepper

**Method:**

Heat oven to 375°. Cut squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds and fibers in the center. Place on a baking sheet and bake cut side up (or down; opinions differ) until fork-tender, about 40 minutes.

Once the squash is cool enough to handle, scoop out the spaghetti-like strands of the squash with a fork. Place the strands in clean kitchen towel and squeeze gently to remove some of the excess moisture. You should now have about 4 cups of squash (once you fluff it back up).

Add all of the remaining ingredients and mix until combined, separating the squash strands with your fingers as you mix.

Grease 2 mini muffin tins, or you can use a baking sheet. Fill each cup with about a tablespoon of the squash mixture and pat to compress, or drop onto baking sheet and form slightly with fingers. When all cups are filled, place the muffin tins (or baking sheet) in the oven and bake until the sides are brown and the top is golden brown—15 to 20 minutes. Serve hot, with a dipping sauce if you like.

**CRUSTLESS “PUMPKIN” PIE FOR A CROWD**

Banana squash makes some of the best pumpkin pie we’ve ever had. You can get these beauties at Christ Orchard, along with many other types of pumpkin and squash. Here I’ve adapted a classic pumpkin pie recipe into a casserole dish that can be stretched to serve a large group. It’s also easy to make this one gluten-free, since it’s crustless.

**For the pie:**

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 tsp salt

2 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp ginger

1/2 tsp cloves

4 eggs

2 lb. cooked, mashed banana squash\*

24 oz evaporated milk (or 3 c. half & half)

**For the topping:**

1 cup flour (substitute coconut or almond flour for a gluten-free version)

1 cup chopped pecans

1/2 cup packed brown sugar (maple syrup?)

6 tablespoons softened butter

1 tsp ground cinnamon

pinch sea salt

**Method:**

Lightly grease bottom of 9x13 baking pan or glass baking dish. Preheat oven (see baking instructions below).

Combine sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves in small bowl. Beat eggs lightly in large bowl. Stir in squash and sugar-spice mixture. Gradually stir in evaporated milk. Pour into baking dish.

Combine ingredients for topping and sprinkle over the pumpkin mixture.

Bake: baking pan: 350° for 40 to 50 minutes

glass baking dish: 325° for 60 to 65 minutes

\*To bake your squash: Cut in half lengthwise (or in smaller chunks to hasten cooking time), remove seeds and fibers. Place in ungreased baking dish, and add about ¼ inch water. Cover and bake at 350 or 400 until tender (baking times may vary; plan for an hour or more. It took a *long* time for my squash in my oven).