

Secret Santas: Camerota's Cupboard December 2010

Last week UNICEF released "The Children Left Behind," a report that examined inequality in well-being among children in 24 of the world's richest countries (US, Canada, and Europe). Did you know that in the category of "Healthy Eating," the US ranked 20th? I don't know how adults would fare, but obesity and its attendant diseases including cancer are rampant in our population. This is the season when Secret Santas sneak around to hide surprises for friends and loved ones. How about becoming a Secret Santa in this season of caloric excess and in the New Year by slipping healthy surprises into meals you prepare for the children of all ages you care for.

Sneaky Corn Bread

(Adapted from Mark Bittman's *How to Cook Everything*)

Replacing the white flour in traditional corn bread with white beans adds fiber and protein. Current dietary guidelines recommend that we eat at least 3 cups of beans a week. This sneaky change is surprisingly delicious.

- 1 cup 1% milk
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 ½ cups (about 7 ounces) medium grind cornmeal
- 1 ½ cups cannellini (white kidney) beans
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 eggs

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place the oil in a medium ovenproof skillet or in an 8-inch square baking pan over medium heat; heat until good and hot, about 2 minutes, then turn off the heat. Meanwhile, combine the dry ingredients in a bowl. Mix the egg into the milk. Stir 1 ½ cups well-cooked white beans (canned are fine), pureed and drained, into the milk-egg mixture. Stir the liquid plus white bean mixture into the dry ingredients, combining well; if it seems too dry, add another tablespoon of milk. Pour the batter into the preheated oil, smooth out the top if necessary, and place in the oven. Bake about 30 minutes, until the top is lightly browned and the sides have pulled away from the pan; a toothpick inserted into the center will come out clean. Serve hot or warm.

Makes about 9 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 175 calories, 6 gr protein, 27 gr carbohydrate, 3 gr dietary fiber, 5 gr fat, 43 milligrams cholesterol, 323 milligrams sodium.

Sneaky (Salmon) Burgers

(From *Cooking Light*, July 2006)

A steady diet of beef burgers is unhealthy, and red meat is thought to increase the incidence of prostate cancer. But replace the beef with salmon. . . . And Voila! A delicious dish rich in omega-3 fats.

1 cup finely chopped red onion
¼ cup thinly sliced fresh basil
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 (1-pound) salmon fillet, skinned and chopped
1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce
1 large egg white
Cooking spray
8 (3/4-ounce) slices focaccia, toasted.

1. Combine first 5 ingredients in a large bowl. Combine hot pepper sauce and egg white in a small bowl; add egg white mixture to salmon mixture, stirring well to combine.
2. Divide the mixture into 4 equal portions, shaping each into a ½-inch thick patty. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add salmon patties, and cook 3 minutes on each side or until desired degree of doneness. Serve patties on toasted focaccia.

Makes 4 servings (serving size: 1 burger)

Nutrient information per serving (1 burger): 190 calories (42% from fat); fat 8.8 gr (sat 2.1 gr, mono 3.8, poly 2.1 gr); protein 25.2gr; carb 1.1 gr; fiber 0.3 gr; chol 58 mg; iron 0.6mg; sodium 236 mg; calc 21mg

Swedish Buffalo Meatballs with Vegetables

(from *More Delicious Still Nutritious*)

Again, beef meatballs are not the healthiest food choice. Substitute buffalo (bison), available at Kroger's, for the beef and you have a leaner, better-for-you meat. Secret Santa strikes again!

Meatballs:

1 pound ground buffalo meat
¾ cup dry, plain bread crumbs
1/3 cup skim milk
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
1 large egg
½ teaspoon ground allspice, divided
½ teaspoon ground ginger, divided
½ teaspoon black pepper, divided
¼ teaspoon salt

Sauce:

3 cups thinly sliced fresh mushrooms
1 ½ cups sliced carrots
1 ½ cups sliced onion
1 can (14 ounces) reduced sodium beef broth
1 ½ cups water, divided
2 tablespoons all purpose flour
1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes

1. In a medium bowl, combine ground buffalo meat, bread crumbs, milk, onion, egg, ¼ teaspoon ground allspice, ¼ teaspoon ground ginger, ¼ teaspoon black pepper and salt, Knead with hands until well mixed. Shape into 36 (1-inch) meatballs.
2. Spray a large skillet with cooking spray. Heat for 2 to 3 minutes over low-medium heat. Add buffalo meatballs; cook for 5 to 7 minutes, browning on all sides. Remove temporarily from skillet.
3. Add mushrooms, carrots and onion to skillet; sauté for 3 to 4 minutes.
4. Add beef broth, 1 cup water, remaining ¼ teaspoon allspice, ginger and black pepper to vegetables in skillet. Stir to mix; continue heating on low-medium heat.
5. In a separate bowl or measuring cup, combine remaining ½ cup water and flour. Stir until smooth.
6. Gradually add water-flour mix mixture to broth-vegetable mixture in skillet, stirring constantly until thick and bubbly.
7. Return buffalo meatballs to skillet, cover. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes.
8. Remove cover. Add parsley flakes; stir. Heat 2 to 3 minutes. Serve over noodles or rice.

Makes 6 servings (about 6 meatballs per serving)

Nutrition information per serving (about 6 buffalo meatballs):

250 calories; 23 gr protein; 20 gr carbohydrate; 2 gr dietary fiber; 9 gr fat; 3.5 gr saturated fat; 79 mg cholesterol; 458 mg sodium