



VEGETARIAN CHRISTMAS FEAST

SO GOOD YOU WON'T MISS MEAT!

Penny Crowther Nutritional Therapy

STARTERS

Fried olives with feta

SOUP

Spicy winter squash

SALAD

Orange & watercress

MAIN COURSE

Cheesy lentil Loaf
Roasted vegetables

DESSERT

Flourless dark chocolate & cranberry cake



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RECIPES

Fried green olives with feta (makes 20)

2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley

1 egg

50g breadcrumbs

50g feta cheese

20 large green olives, pitted

30g plain flour

100mls olive oil

Finely chop the parsley and crumble the feta. Mix the feta and parsley in a bowl.

Stuff a little of the mixture into the centre of each of the olives.

Line up 3 small bowls. Place the flour in the first bowl (a good idea if this is a shallow bowl), the beaten egg in the second bowl and the breadcrumbs in the third bowl.

Heat the oil in a frying pan. Toss the olives, a few at a time in the flour, then dip into the beaten egg and finally roll in the breadcrumbs.

Fry in the oil for one minute or until golden brown.

Remove from the pan and drain on paper towels. Repeat until all the olives are cooked.

Make this recipe gluten free by using gluten free breadcrumbs

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Spicy winter squash soup

Serves 4

500g butternut squash
2 medium onions
1 large potato
1 large sweet potato
2 fat cloves garlic
850mls stock & water (combined in total e.g. 425mls of each)
1 rounded teaspoon paprika
Pinch cayenne pepper
Black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon tamari sauce
Chopped chives & natural yoghurt to serve

Chop butternut squash into chunks, de-seed and cut the skin off with a sharp knife. Peel and roughly chop the onions, potatoes and garlic.

Add the paprika, cayenne pepper, ground black pepper and tamari sauce. Simmer gently for 20 mins or until the vegetables are soft.

Liquidise finely, stir in natural, unsweetened yoghurt (e.g. Yeo Valley) and serve with large sprinkling of chopped fresh chives.

Make this recipe dairy free by using coconut yoghurt or plain soya yoghurt instead of cow's milk yoghurt

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Orange & watercress salad

Serves 4

3 leeks
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 teaspoons tamari sauce
3 oranges
400g watercress
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil to drizzle

Trim and thinly slice the leeks. Put into a large saucepan with 2 tablespoons olive oil. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes until the leeks are soft.

Drizzle with the tamari sauce, remove and allow to cool.

Peel the orange and thinly slice into rings. Layer the orange slices with the leeks and watercress.

Drizzle with a little extra olive oil and season with ground black pepper.

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Cheesy lentil loaf

Serves 6

1 mug red lentils
2 mugs stock (ideally save some water from cooked vegetables for this)
2 slices bread crumbs
4 oz grated strong cheese
1 leek or onion peeled and finely chopped
4oz mushrooms peeled and finely chopped
2 beaten eggs
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon each dry mustard, ground cumin & ground coriander
2 tablespoons tomato puree
1 handful of fresh or 1 teaspoon of dried herbs of choice (e.g. coriander, thyme, oregano)
Black or white pepper

Put the lentils, onion (or leek), stock, tomato puree, mustard, cumin and coriander into a pan and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for about 20 minutes until all of the liquid is absorbed (if it's not boil rapidly to reduce or drain the excess stock off).

Preheat the oven to Gas 5 and line with greaseproof paper a 2lb loaf tin (if you haven't got one, you can use a couple of cake tins, the deeper the better).

Add to the lentil mixture, the mushrooms, breadcrumbs, cheese, pepper and herbs. Bind in the beaten eggs and lemon juice. Smooth into the prepared tin and bake for about one hour.

For a lovely colourful effect when sliced (and an extra veg portion!), you can add a layer of chopped red roast pepper or some raw spinach to the middle of the roast before cooking.

I have made this with green lentils as well which gives it a more "meaty" flavour. You can use any strong cheese, I recommend the Woodland Dairy Sheep Wensleydale or St Helen's Farm Goat's cheese. The loaf is good hot or cold and reheats well. It's important to have some greaseproof paper on hand to line the tin as otherwise it's very messy to get the loaf out of the tin!

This recipe comes courtesy of Viv, chef at the Flower Essence retreat centre on the beautiful Isle of Gigha, Scotland. <http://www.healingorchids.com/>

Make this recipe gluten free by using gluten free bread crumbs

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Herb Roasted Vegetables

Serves 4-6

6 medium potatoes
1 red pepper
1 orange pepper
4 courgettes
1 aubergine
2 cloves garlic
1 large red onion
Dried rosemary
Dried thyme

Heat the oven to 200 degrees.

You will need two shallow roasting dishes or one large roasting dish. To ensure the vegetables roast properly, they need to be spread out and not piled on top of each other which makes them go soggy.

The oven needs to be very hot before cooking and the veg need to be cut up into the sizes below to ensure they all cook at the same time.

You could add sweet potatoes and carrots - I have left these out as they are in the squash soup!

Peel and chop the onion into 8 wedges.

Peel and cut the potatoes into 2cm cubes.

Cut the courgettes in half lengthways and cut into 2cm slices.

Top and tail the aubergine, cut into 4 and then into 2cm chunks.

De seed the peppers and cut into about 8 slices each.

Add 3 tablespoons olive oil to each roasting dish or 6 tablespoons oil to one dish. Add the vegetables, sprinkle them generously with dried rosemary and dried thyme. Mix the veg up so they are coated with oil. You can use fresh herbs. I prefer dried in this instance because fresh rosemary can be a bit chewy.

Cook in the pre heated oven for 50 minutes or until the veg are soft but with a bit of bite. Midway through cooking give the veg a stir and add some more olive oil if they are too dry.

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Flourless dark chocolate & cranberry cake

Serves 4-6

100g ready-to-eat prunes
50g xylitol
50g 85% cocoa solids chocolate
100g dried cranberries (dried sour cherries are also delicious)
25g chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)
1 teaspoon natural vanilla essence
75g ground almonds
3 eggs

Preheat the oven to 180/350/Gas Mark 4. Grease and line a 7 inch round shallow cake tin with baking paper.

Liquidise the prunes and xylitol with 3 tablespoons water to form a paste.

Melt the chocolate and allow to cool slightly. Stir in the prune mixture, dried fruit, nuts if using, vanilla essence and eggs.

Pour the mixture into the tin and bake for approx 15-20 minutes until firm to the touch.

For a pudding, this cake is great served with a dollop of coconut cream. You can find coconut cream in supermarkets usually next to canned coconut milk. If you are feeling in need of extra xmas indulgence, mix melted dark chocolate into the coconut cream for a creamy chocolatey sauce.

This delicious cake is *naturally gluten free*. Sweetened with prunes, dried fruit, very dark chocolate and xylitol it is lower in sugar than your average cake and contains no butter or margarine. The added nuts and dried fruit mean it is higher in nutrients as well to give more lasting energy.

Xylitol is a natural sweetener derived from plant sources. Although it looks and tastes like sugar it contains none and has only around half the calories of sugar as well as a low glycaemic index. You can find it in supermarkets e.g. Total Sweet pure xylitol at Waitrose.