

# Be blessed, not stressed

*Chef Hethyr's festive feasting starts with simple recipes that add holiday joy*

Not only did Hethyr Pletsch hand out some wonderful recipes for holiday appetizers and easily freezable vegetable sides during last month's cooking class, she had tips galore for making sure holiday cooking is fun and bless-filled (rather than stressful):

★ Why serve appetizers with a big celebratory meal? "At my house, nothing ever comes out on time," super-organized Hethyr says. It gives people something to do, takes the edge off their hunger and helps prevent over-indulgence in holiday cocktails.

★ By using Belgian endive leaves for your appetizer (see the recipe below; it was one of the clear favorites) you eliminate the need for utensils. The mild flavor won't overwhelm. And it's a way to get more greens.

★ You can substitute thinly sliced roast beef, sliced turkey or prosciutto (Italian ham) for the bacon in many

dishes. Substitute, substitute, substitute! Try cranberry relish in place of cranberry sauce, or trade goat cheese for cream cheese. Experiment with an exotic grain like quinoa in place of rice or risotto pasta.

★ Mashed potatoes freeze beautifully, Hethyr says. She makes hers by first sauteing garlic and rosemary in butter, and they tasted phenomenal. And here's an alternative for warming and serving them: after thawing them in the fridge for a day or two, put them in the crockpot for a couple of hours to reheat and serve. Try to think of alternatives to making or warming everything in the oven: "Don't put yourself in a box."

★ Hethyr offered this quick recipe for making a garlic paste: put a tablespoon of minced garlic on a cutting board and sprinkle with kosher salt. Using a large knife, press down on the flat side of the blade and bring it across

the garlic, pulling it toward you. The garlic and salt mix will turn into a paste, presto!

★ Hethyr reminded everyone that a CSA is a great way to incorporate more vegetables, including some you may not try otherwise. Ranch Foods Direct is a pick-up location for Greenhorn Acres CSA and shares are available.



## Smoked Turkey-Cranberry Boats

2 oz. goat cheese  
4 T. whole berry cranberry sauce (or relish)  
12 Belgian endive leaves  
2 thin slices smoked turkey, sliced into 12 strips  
1 T. chopped fresh thyme, divided  
1/4 c. toasted walnuts  
3 slices bacon, cooked, crumbled  
Salt and pepper

In a small bowl, mix together goat cheese, cranberry sauce and 2 tsp. thyme.

Spread endive leaves evenly with mixture, then top each with a twist of turkey and equal amounts of walnuts and crumbled bacon. Season with salt and pepper and garnish with remaining thyme. (Makes 12.)

## Green Bean Bundles

*Come Easter, substitute asparagus for the green beans!*

1 lb. fresh green beans, trimmed and cut to 2 to 3 inch length  
12 slices of bacon, halved  
1 c. butter  
1 c. brown sugar  
1 tsp Dijon mustard

Preheat oven to 350. Wrap 6 green beans in each piece of bacon and place seam side-down in baking dish. Melt butter and mix well with brown sugar and mustard. Drizzle over green bean bundles. Bake for 30 minutes or until bacon is crisp.

If using the Flavor Wave convection oven, place dish on lower rack and cook for 15 minutes. Carefully remove dish from Flavor Wave, flip bundles and cook 15 minutes more. (Makes 24 bundles.)

## Spicy White Bean-Pumpkin Dip

2 15 oz. cans cannellini beans, drained  
1 15 oz can pumpkin  
1 lime, juiced  
1/2 T cider vinegar  
salt and pepper, to taste  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 T. fresh ginger root, minced  
2 tsp pepper flakes  
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper  
1/2 c. light olive oil  
1/4 c. toasted pumpkin seeds for garnish

Combine all ingredients except olive oil and pumpkin seeds in a food processor (or blender.) With processor running, slowly stream olive oil through the food chute until dip is smooth or desired consistency is reached. Transfer dip to serving bowl, cover and refrigerate one hour at least (overnight is best.) Serve with baked pita chips. This can also be used as a sandwich condiment.

## Butternut Squash Casserole

2 lb. butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cut into 1-in. cubes  
1/2 c. sugar  
3/4 c. milk  
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract  
Pinch of salt  
1 T. flour  
2 eggs  
2 T. melted butter  
2 oz. gingersnap cookies, crushed  
2 T. melted butter  
1/4 c. brown sugar

Preheat to 425 F. Steam fresh squash 7 to 10 minutes until tender. Drain and mash. In a greased 8 x 8 in. dish, combine squash, sugar, milk, vanilla, salt, flour, eggs and 2 T. butter. Cover with foil and bake for 45 minutes or until set. Uncover, sprinkle with gingersnap topping and bake at 375 F. for an additional 15 minutes. For topping: In a bowl, combine gingersnaps, 2 T. butter and 1/4 c. brown sugar.

## Leftover Sweet Potato-Pecan Pancakes

1 1/4 c. white whole wheat flour (or all-purpose)  
1/4 c. chopped pecans, toasted  
2 1/4 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp pumpkin pie spice  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1 c. milk  
1/4 c. packed brown sugar  
1 T. canola oil  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
2 lg. eggs, lightly beaten  
1 lg or 2 small sweet potatoes, cooked and mashed

Lightly spoon flour into dry measuring cups; level with a knife. Combine flour, 2 T. pecans, baking powder, spice and salt in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine milk and next 4 ingredients (milk through eggs); add to flour mixture, stirring until smooth. Stir in sweet potatoes. Melt butter in large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Put about 1/4 c. batter into skillet for each pancake.