

Coriander, fennel spice up chickpea stew

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CORRESPONDENT

No one is saying you must become vegetarian, but the health benefits of a mostly plant-based diet have become increasingly clear. If you are devoted to eating meat, adding more meatless meals, beyond pasta and pizza, can be challenging. But using a wide variety of herbs, spices and other seasonings will boost flavors, making this idea more enjoyable. Think of countries where little or no meat is used most of the time. In the Mediterranean, fresh and dried herbs are a natural part of every cooking, enlivening dishes from French onion soup seasoned with thyme to Moroccan vegetable tagines spiced with cumin and cinnamon. In Latin America, cumin, cilantro and epazote, a wild oregano, are as much mainstays as chile peppers. Indians, of course, use a wide array of spices and herbal seasonings, like curry leaf to enrich meatless curries or to dal, a legume dish eaten every day. Southeast Asian cooking is perfumed with cilantro, lemongrass and galangal, a knobly, more aromatic relative of ginger. Through eating in ethnic restaurants and travelling broadly, Americans have become more aware of how much seasonings can enrich a meal, and we keep a well-stocked spice rack.

However, we tend to use only some of its contents regularly. Here are ideas to make



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Using a wide variety of herbs, spices and other seasonings will boost flavors in this chickpea stew.

you comfortable using more spices and herbs, in ways that make meatless dishes exceptional. First, remember the pepper. Its flowery, complex flavors enhance nearly every dish. Once it is ground, pepper loses much of its stimulating complexity, providing mainly heat. This makes it worthwhile to invest in a peppermill and a jar of black peppercorns. If this is not practical, look for a jar of whole pepper with a grinder built into the cap, a handy option now sold at many supermarkets. Second, try new combinations, as in this Spanish-style chickpea stew, with spicy — not bitter — intensified by ground fennel, coriander and a touch of cocoa. It also contains noodles toasted in the oven until golden brown, adding an earthy flavor.

MEDITERRANEAN CHICKPEA STEW WITH TOASTED NOODLES

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 Spanish onion, chopped
- 1 celery rib, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground fennel
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1 can (28 oz.) whole tomatoes
- 1/2 lb. fideos or angel hair egg pasta
- 1 can (16 oz.) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 6 cups chopped fresh Swiss chard leaves (about 1 1/2 bunches, or 1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, defrosted and squeezed dry

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Over medium-high heat, heat the oil in a large pot that can be used stove-top and in the oven.

Sauté the onion and celery until onion is translucent, about 3 minutes.

Stir in garlic. Cook 1 minute.

Stir in chili powder, cocoa, coriander, fennel and bay leaf.

Add tomatoes with their liquid.

Add 4 cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until celery is tender, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, on a non-stick baking sheet, break up pasta into 2-inch pieces.

Spread evenly in pan.

Bake 4 to 5 minutes, just until golden brown, watching carefully to avoid burning.

Mix toasted noodles, chickpeas and greens into the stew. Cook until the pasta is tender, about 10 minutes. Ladle into shallow, wide bowls, and serve. Makes 8 servings.

Nutritional information per serving: 143 calories, 3g total fat (less than 1 g saturated fat), 25 g carbohydrate, 6 g protein, 4 g dietary fiber, 368 mg sodium.

"Something Different" is written for the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) by Dana Jacoby, author of The Joy of Soy, and recipe creator for AICR's Stopping Cancer Before It Starts.

WINE

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estate winery for the 1997 vintage. Beginning with 2001 white and 2000 reds, the wines were christened *Esprit de Beaucautel Blanc* and *Esprit de Beaucautel*.

Cotes de Tablas is also new. ■ 2001 *Esprit de Beaucautel Blanc* (\$23) is a traditional blend of Southern Rhone white grapes: roussanne, viognier, grenache blanc and marsanne. Rich, round and lush with hints of cinnamon spice, this is the best white wine blend made in California.

■ 2000 *Esprit de Beaucautel* (\$35) is a traditional Southern Rhone red blend of mourvèdre, syrah, grenache and counoise. Spicy, juicy, delicious and intensely rich with a velvety smooth finish, this wine is the best red Rhone blend from California!

■ 2000 *Cotes de Tablas* (\$25) is 84 percent grenache and 16 percent syrah, also a typical southern red Rhone blend. It's concentrated with a dark fruit profile, peppery spice, marvelous structure and a lengthy finish.

These wines are in limited quantity, so if they "sound" enticing, don't wait to get your share!

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WINE PICKS

Current wine buzz is all about SYRAH, the fastest growing wine category, up 66 percent in the U.S. in the last year, according to latest AC Nielsen Scantrak data.

Awesome: 2001 IO Upper Bench (\$35) is a big, powerful, gutsy mouthful from California's Santa Maria Valley. 2001 IO Ryan Road (\$35) is more plush than Upper Bench, yet filled with concentrated flavors and depthful intensity from vineyards located in California's northern San Luis Obispo County.

Other delicious California SYRAH: 2000 Stags' Leap Napa Valley (\$29) and 2001 Ctos LaChance Central Coast (\$20).

Best from Chile: 2000 Errazuoz Max Reserva Syrah (\$25).

Best from Australia where syrah is called shiraz: 2000 Rosemount Estate Show Reserve McLaren Vale/Langhorne Creek (\$24); 2000 Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra (\$24); and 2000 Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna (\$24).

Best buy: 2001 Lindemans Reserve, South Australia (\$10).

CHEF

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personnel manning stations. Gabriel said he'd serve all over again, too.

"I think about the war," Gabriel said.

"If I could go back and serve on a ship, I would.

"I'd do it in a heartbeat," Gabriel believes American troops are protecting the United States and freedom here while fighting in Iraq.

"We're protecting our freedom and we're doing what we have to do to protect our country," Gabriel said.

"If I could go back and serve on a ship, I would.

This year, Gabriel expects to

enjoy Easter with family members. "I like to do a leg of lamb or a rack of lamb for Easter," Gabriel said.

"It will be a nice wholesome meal with roasted root vegetables."

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