

Twists on Thanksgiving Favorites:

Edamame Salad, Vanilla Sweet Potatoes, & Coconut Pumpkin Pie

Finally. My favorite time of year. The holidays are beginning, moods are lifting, the air is cooling, and I'm ready to start cooking. I get that seasonal bug to try even more new healthy recipes – and of course create my own. Thanksgiving is one of my most longed-for days of the year, and one reason, second to spending a relaxing, happy day with loved ones, is of course the food. I enjoy this festive meal so much that until recently, when my mother would ask me what I wanted for my special birthday meal, I would answer: "Thanksgiving dinner!" Now, although for this one day per year, I still happily scarf down creamy mashed potatoes, even creamier green bean casserole, boxed stuffing, sugary pumpkin pie with heavy vanilla ice cream, and the like, my conscience has chimed in (as have my headaches, digestion, etc.) and made me eager to search for new, healthier, but still craveable holiday favorites. Try one this year, and see how your family reacts; you could find a new tradition that's a hit both at the table and for your body.



Edamame Salad (in place of green bean casserole)

Makes about 6 side servings
 1 1/2 cups frozen shelled edamame (8 oz.)
 1 (15-oz) can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (15-oz) can chick peas (garbanzo beans), drained and rinsed
 2 cups thinly sliced celery
 1/4 cup olive oil
 2 tbsp fresh lime juice
 1 tbsp agave nectar
 1 1/2 tsp salt
 1/4 tsp black pepper
 Lemon zest to garnish

Boil the edamame in lightly salted water for about 4 minutes, until cooked throughout but not soft. Drain, and rinse under cold water to speedily bring the beans to room temperature. Combine everything in a large bowl, making sure the oil, lime juice, and agave evenly coat the ingredients.

Vanilla Sweet Potatoes (in place of mashed white potatoes), adapted from Heidi Swanson's recipe on 101cookbooks.com

Makes about 6 small servings
 1 1/2 lbs sweet potatoes, cleaned and left a bit damp
 1/2 cup oat milk
 1/3 vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped
 2 tbsp unsalted butter, at room temperature
 1 tsp grated orange zest
 Celtic sea salt
 Black pepper

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Put the potatoes on a baking sheet, and bake until tender to a fork tip, 50 minutes to 1 hour. Remove from oven, and let cool until you can handle them, 10 to 15 minutes. Peel and discard the skin.

Meanwhile, pour the oat milk into a pot, add the vanilla bean and orange zest, and set over medium heat. Bring to a simmer, and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Discard the vanilla bean. Pour the mixture over the potatoes, and add the butter.

Mash the potato mixture until it reaches the consistency you like. Put it in a food processor if you want a puree. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Keep covered and warm until ready to serve.

Coconut Pumpkin Pie (loosely based off of the Food Network's Barefoot Contessa's recipe and the tart recipe I included last December)

For the crust, I use Arrowhead Mills Graham Cracker Crust, sweetened with evaporated cane juice and made with wheat flour.

For the filling:
 1 15-ounce can pumpkin
 1/2 cup coconut milk (lite is fine)
 3/4 cup Sucanat
 3/4 teaspoon salt
 1 tsp pumpkin spice blend
 3 large egg yolks

2 tsp (usually 1 pkg) unflavored gelatin
 1 ripe banana, mashed
 1 tsp grated orange zest
 1/2 tsp coconut extract
 1/2 cup cold heavy cream
 1/4 cup unsweetened shredded coconut, toasted

Although the crust doesn't require any baking, I toast it at 350°F for about five minutes for that toasty flavor. Set aside to cool. Heat the pumpkin, coconut milk, Sucanat, salt, and spice blend in a pot set over another pot of simmering water until hot, about five minutes. Whisk the egg yolks in another bowl, and stir some of the hot pumpkin into the egg yolks to heat them. Then pour the mixture into the heated mixture, and stir well. Stir continuously over heat for another few minutes, until it begins to thicken. Remove from heat so that the eggs don't scramble. Dissolve the gelatin in 1/4 cup cold water, and add with banana, orange zest, and coconut extract to the pumpkin mixture. Mix well, and set aside to cool.

Whip the cream until soft peaks form. Fold gently into the pumpkin mixture, and pour into the tart shell. Chill for at least two hours and serve cold. To top, whip cream with a sprinkle of orange zest, cinnamon, coconut extract, and a tablespoon of Turbinado sugar (or no sweetener). Dust each slice with toasted coconut before serving.

Mix tradition with fresh, nutritious ingredients, and twist old favorites into new ones, leaving your family and friends asking for more.

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