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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

July 2017

TASTE OF THE SEA, PART 1: First Course Ideas

Vegetarian "Fish" Spread

Finnish White "Fish" Chowder

A Long Island "Clam" Chowder

**Vegetarian Lobster Bisque
with Baltimore Seasoning**

When you identify yourself as a vegetarian, the first question is usually, "How long have you been a vegetarian?" When you say that you made this lifestyle change in 1973, the next question is often, "But, of course, you do eat fish and chicken, don't you?" When you say, "No" and bite your tongue as you suggest that fish and birds are animals, you know where this conversation is going. "But, fish is good for you . . . how do you get your Omega-3?" Then comes the big question and my big opportunity – "What do you eat?"

Once the Wisconsin glaciation receded from the area of present-day Lake Ontario about 12,000 years ago the compressed earth began to recover. An unexpected result of this lifting of the topography in Canada was a flow of glacial outwash into the original basin of the Genesee River and a deposit of debris that closed off the basin creating a bay, Irondequoit

Bay. The River's northward flow was diverted to the West, to the present channel through the gorges in the bed rock, eventually entering Lake Ontario at Charl6tte. When I was young, I often hiked from my home down to the shores of Irondequoit Bay, the former mouth of the Genesee River. We did not run home to get a drink of water nor did we carry water bottles; we thought nothing of scooping up a handful of water from a fast-flowing stream and we ate our catch if we went fishing. The contamination of our streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans, and, as a direct consequence, our water supply and the creatures to whom these bodies of water are home, can be laid at the feet of irresponsible human activity.

What makes sea meat taste different from the meat of land animals or from the flesh of vegetables and fruits? If you throw the question out into the world for consideration, you will get some thoughtful answers but most people seem to associate the food of the sea with salt. This could not be further from the truth. Anyone who uses sea vegetables in their cooking knows that seaweeds are actually not salty but they do have a unique flavor that appeals to that fifth taste sensation to which our taste buds are sensitive, *umami*. As I mentioned in a previous post (*see recipe archive*, December 2016), the name for this sensation, *umami*, was coined in 1908 by Kikunae Ikeda of Tokyo Imperial University. It combines the Japanese word *umai* for delicious and the Japanese *mi* for taste. He identified it in *kombu dashi*, a flavorful clear broth made with *kombu* seaweed. In 1913 his disciple Professor Shintaro Kodama identified another substance in dried bonito flakes which produces the same *umami*. In 1957 Akira Kuninaka found the ribonucleotide guanosine monophosphate (GMP) initiated the same taste sensation. So mushrooms were added to the list. He also identified a synergistic relationship between ribonucleotides and the amino acid glutamate in heightening the *umami* sensation. It took a long, long time for the scientific community to accept Professor Ikeda's theory of a taste response for glutamate distinct from saltiness.



Additionally, the iodine in sea vegetables lends a taste of the sea that is unique and at the same time provides iodine to the diet. Since vegetarians, especially vegans, often do not get sufficient iodine in their diet, routine inclusion of sea vegetables in your diet is pretty smart way to supplement.

Bringing the taste of the sea to your table in the form of sea vegetables can be a little tricky today; you have to choose an organic product that is carefully farmed and hand-harvested for sustainability. Random net-drag harvesting is no better for seaweed than it is for fish! Unless the seaweed is responsibly farmed you could do your health more harm than good.

Recently "fishless fish" fillets have shown up in the grocery store freezer. They are a breaded soy product that, in and of itself, offers a different taste to the vegetarian plate. They also offer an opportunity to the cook to create or adapt. We fell head over heels for the Finnish "fish" soup, which follows, that I adapted using this product. The key, however, to many of these recipes is a flavorful broth. You can experiment with the sea vegetables available in your natural food stores or you can try my sea broth which appears on p. 411 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*.

Frozen *tofu* (*see recipe archive*, July 2016) will reintroduce "tuna" and "crabmeat" recipes to your menu planning. In addition, adding other *umami*-rich food like mushrooms can enhance both texture and *umami* as in the lobster bisque and the Long Island chowder which follow.

Oh, if you are worried about Omega-3, seaweed does provide Omega-3 as do flax, hemp, and chia seeds, mustard oil, beans, winter squash, leafy greens, members of the cabbage family, berries, wild rice, mangoes, and honeydew melons.

VEGETARIAN "FISH" SPREAD

TPT - 4 minutes

The combination of baked tofu and chickpeas gave me another chance to resurrect the taste memory of sea meat in a mild, pleasant spread. The use of smoked tofu and smoked paprika add a nuance that encourages the deception. Amazingly, the taste can be simulated without the use of sea vegetables. We enjoy this at tea time in the summer garden or in front of the fire in the winter or as a picnic item when, for a change of scene, we visit a nearby state forest.

2/3 cup canned chick peas—well-drained and seed coats removed
4 ounces baked tofu—chopped*
1 teaspoon almond butter
1 teaspoon tahini sauce
1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lime juice
2 tablespoons fresh parsley—chopped

In the work bowl of the food processor, combine chick peas, chopped *tofu*, almond butter, *tahini* sauce, smoked paprika, lime juice, and chopped fresh parsley. Process until smooth, scraping down the sides of the work bowl as required. Turn into a serving dish. Refrigerate until required.

Serve with crackers, toasts, and *crudités*.

Yields 1 cupful

Note: *Baked *tofu* is available in natural food stores and in well-stocked grocery stores.

1/16 SERVING (i. e., 1 tablespoonful) –
PROTEIN = 1.6 g.; FAT = 1.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.1 g.;
CALORIES = 21; CALORIES FROM FAT = 52%



FINNISH WHITE “FISH” CHOWDER

Kalakeitto

TPT - 1 hour and 7 minutes

If you grew up in Boston, you only knew white clam chowder; if you lived in Rhode Island, in which red clam chowder originated, on Long Island, and in New Jersey, your clam chowder was red; and if you lived in upstate New York, you had a choice. As I have traveled across our country I am amazed at how few restaurants and diners note on their menus whether the clam chowder they serve is New England cream clam chowder or Manhattan red clam chowder. Finns eat a lot of fish and they dearly love a milk chowder. Until “fishless soy fish” was introduced, I never thought to explore this passion of the Finns.

- 2 cups two-percent milk**
- 1 small onion--sliced**
- 3 whole allspice**
- 1 large bay leaf—broken in half**
- 1/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper**
- A shake or two of *Dulse* flakes***

- 1 medium carrot—scraped or pared and diced**
- 1 large potato—peeled and cubed**
- 1/4 cup diced rutabaga**

- 3 frozen “fishless soy files”**

- Snipped fresh dillweed or parsley, for garnish**



In a heavy saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine milk, onion slices, whole allspice, bay leaf pieces, salt, white pepper, and *Dulse* flakes. Allow to come to the simmer. *Immediately, reduce heat to LOW*. Simmer for 15 minutes. Remove and discard allspice and bay leaf pieces.

Add diced carrot, cubed potato, and diced rutabaga. Allow to simmer for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, using a sharp knife, remove breading coat from frozen filets. Cut “fish” into chunks. Add to vegetables in milk stock. Allow to simmer for 10 minutes more. Turn into a heated **6-cup soup tureen**.

Serve into heated soup plates. Garnish with snipped dillweed or parsley.

Yields 5 cupfuls

Notes: **Palmaria palmate* is a sea vegetable, a seaweed, that is commonly called *Dulse*. If you want a more pronounced taste of the sea, add more. I use an organic product, available online, from New Brunswick, Canada. It is not only organic, it is hand-harvested for sustainability. Sea vegetables are very high in mineral content and very low in sodium.

This recipe can be doubled, when required. Remember to get out the bigger soup tureen if you double.



1/4 SERVING (i. e., about 1 1/4 cupfuls) –
PROTEIN = 8.6 g.; FAT = 6.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.5 g.;
CALORIES = 171; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

A LONG ISLAND “CLAM” CHOWDER

TPT - 26 hours and 21 minutes;
1 hour = uncovered refrigeration;
24 hours = flavor development period

Long Island clam chowder will not be found in the soup aisle of a grocery store; it is homemade but, sadly, less and less today, I fear. Pollution of the waters that surround Long Island and the extensive development along the shoreline have decreased the bivalve production from Long Island’s waters so walking the shoreline to dig your own clams is no longer an option. The classic chowder is most definitely derived from Rhode Island clam chowder. It has always been derided by those in Massachusetts who feel that their white chowder is the clam chowder. By the time you get out to Block Island, fourteen miles east of Montauk Point but politically part of Rhode Island, the chowder is not Rhode Island clam chowder but has become New England-style, more correctly Massachusetts chowder, with milk and potatoes.



*To simulate the texture of the chopped hard-shelled clams (quahogs) in this vegetarian version, we dice mushroom stems, lightly sauté in butter, and freeze until we have accumulated enough to make the chowder or its milk-based cousin. A bit of Dulse lends a taste of the sea.**

1 tablespoon butter
3 slices frozen soy bacon—chopped
1 cup well-cleaned and diced mushroom stems
or 3/4 cup dried, diced mushroom stems

1 quart water
1 cup diced celery
1 medium onion—diced
2 cups canned, diced tomatoes
1 tablespoon dried Dulse flakes*
1 teaspoon crushed, dried thyme
1 whole bay leaf
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, to taste
Salt, to taste, if necessary



In a kettle set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Add soy bacon and diced mushroom stems. Sauté until bacon is softened and transparent.

Add water, diced celery, onion, and tomatoes, *Dulse* flakes, crushed thyme, bay leaf, pepper, and salt, if necessary.** *Reduce heat to LOW*. Simmer gently, stirring frequently, for 1 hour. Remove from heat and refrigerate, uncovered, for 1 hour. Cover and allow the flavors to meld in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

Over *LOW* heat, reheat chowder. Turn into a heated tureen. Remove and discard bay leaf.

Serve into heated soup bowls. Accompany with pilot crackers.***

Yields about 7 cupfuls

Notes: **Palmaria palmate* is a sea vegetable, a seaweed, that is commonly called *Dulse*. Organic, hand-harvested *Dulse* is available in natural food stores and online.

**Diced potato and/or carrot and/or turnip can be added, if desired.

***A humidity-resistant cracker was an important part of a meal along the coast of New England and on Long Island. Pilot breads, or pilot biscuits, were always served with chowders. Although unavailable in grocery stores today, pilot crackers can be ordered online.

This recipe can be halved but since the soup freezes well, making the whole recipe is definitely a convenience.

1/7 SERVING (i. e., about 1 cupful) –
PROTEIN = 2.5 g.; FAT = 2.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 5.0 g.;
CALORIES = 47; CALORIES FROM FAT = 42%

VEGETARIAN LOBSTER BISQUE

TPT - 1 hour and 50 minutes;
1 hour = cashew soaking period

Lobster “mushrooms” are parasitic ascomycetes that grow on mushrooms. They are in good company, being, as they are, closely related to morels and truffles. Here, bits of the lobster mushrooms float in a velvety, smooth vegetable-based soup that is truly beautiful.



1/4 cup raw cashews
1/4 cup light cream or half and half*

1 1/2 cups (about 2 ounces) dried lobster fungi—brushed and well-rinsed
2 cups SEA BROTH or other vegetarian “fish” stock**

2 tablespoons butter
1 large shallot—very finely chopped
1 medium carrot—very finely chopped
1 stalk celery—very finely chopped
1 large garlic clove—very finely chopped

1 tablespoon unbleached white flour
1/2 cup dry white wine

1 1/2 teaspoons Dulse flakes***
1 teaspoon BALTIMORE SEASONING [see recipe which follows] or Old Bay Seasoning
3/4 cup canned, crushed tomatoes

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Dash freshly grated nutmeg

In the container of the electric blender, combine cashews and cream. Allow to soak for 1 hour. Blend until *very smooth and no bits of cashew are visible*.

In a kettle set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine dried lobster mushrooms and sea broth. Allow to simmer on a back burner while you prepare the rest of the soup. Once mushrooms have softened, remove using a skimmer. Chop mushrooms in irregular strips and return to the kettle.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Add *very finely* chopped shallot, carrot, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables soften.

Add flour. Cook for several minutes, stirring constantly, until a *roux* is formed. *Gradually*, while stirring constantly, add wine to vegetable mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture begins to thicken.

Add *Dulse* flakes, BALTIMORE SEASONING, and crushed tomatoes. Stir until mixture is thoroughly combined. Remove from heat. Add to cashew cream. Blend until *very smooth*. To remove any bits of vegetables and cashews that could compromise the smooth texture, pour through a fine sieve into kettle with lobster mushrooms and simmering stock. Discard sieved debris.

Season with pepper and nutmeg. Allow to heat through. Turn into heated soup tureen.

Serve into heated soup plates. Refrigerate leftovers.

Yields about 5 cupfuls

Notes: *If you prefer a vegan lobster bisque, prepare the cashew cream using water instead of cream.

**Sea broth was included in *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul* on p. 411 of volume II.

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This recipe can be doubled, when required

1/4 SERVING (i. e., about 1 1/4 cupfuls) –
PROTEIN = 3.5 g.; FAT = 12.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 10.2 g.;
CALORIES = 161; CALORIES FROM FAT = 68%



BALTIMORE SEASONING

TPT - 3 minutes

A wonderful seasoning mixture called “Old Bay Seasoning” which is native to and long a specialty of Baltimore and the Maryland shore, has been a favorite of mine since I first tasted the sensational flavoring affect that it can have on Maryland crab cakes back in the late 1960s before we began to follow a vegetarian lifestyle. I bought the commercial version of the seasoning mixture and have experimented with it in all types of soups, stews, and to brighten mayonnaise to serve with sandwiches and veggie patties. Now I make my own version.

1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon ground bay leaves*
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground mace
1/2 teaspoon ground paprika
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
1/4 teaspoon salt
Pinch ground red pepper (cayenne)

Small pinch ground cloves

In a SEED or COFFEE GRINDER or in the container of the electric blender, combine all ingredients. Blend until a uniform grind results. Or, if preferred, combine ingredients in a mortar and grind together with a pestle.

Store in a cool place, tightly sealed, in a spice jar.

Yields 5 teaspoonfuls

Notes: *The easiest way to grind the bay leaves is to use a mortar and pestle or to use a SEED or COFFEE GRINDER.

A pinch or two of this spice mixture does wonders for veggie burgers or loaves, stews, soups, and salads, too. Rub seasoning mix, as a dry marinade on vegetables or burgers before outdoor or pan grilling.

FOOD VALUES for such herb mixtures are almost negligible.

This month I have shared an appetizer "fish" spread and three "fishless" fish soups.

*The soups, granted, could be used as entrée dishes but
next month I plan to add a few more "fishless" fish entrée ideas to your repertoire
—clams, calamari, and a vegetarian Salade Niçoise.*

If you're not too busy, please drop by,

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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