

Catharine's Story – Easy and Delicious

After hearing of my interest in developing community around good healthy cooking and meals, a co-worker said that I *had* to come to the Monday Suppers group. The first meetings were wonderful: I met many new friends who were all interested, for one reason or another, in healthy, whole food eating. What I didn't get until a few meetings later, was that the focus on nutritional harm reduction and its accessible recipes would take my mostly healthy, vegetarian diet from its occasional "quick" meals (high-carb Italian-comfort food) to a new powerful level of fresh whole food meals that helped to boost my flagging energy and eliminate the occasional foggy-headedness. In addition, the recipes gave me the gift of creative time in the kitchen, something that I did not learn from my mother and her taco helper meals.

Even small changes can have big outcomes, especially if the change is planning ahead. That morning I had washed and soaked a pound of organic black beans. It took me about 42 seconds. All day long the water did the work. Black beans are a fairly fast cooking, inexpensive legume, assuming you remember to soak them ahead – and they're packed with nutrition. At the end of the work day, I quickly looked at the Suppers website and in a few seconds found three uncomplicated recipes for black beans and a sautéed kale with currants, pine nuts and garlic. I made a list and dashed to the grocery where the marketing took about 15 minutes, including a couple hellos with friends.

An hour and a half later – during which time the stove did most of the work while I gardened – a colorful, tasty meal was on the table. My son and I shared this beautiful meal of new tastes and textures. There were lots of "mmmmms" at the table that night. Another new habit I'm trying to establish is making lots and storing leftovers (in glass, for course, don't want those BPAs in the food). I miscalculated on the kale; it was just too delicious and there wasn't any left. But I got it right on the black beans. There was enough for another meal and a quick crash-preventing snack or two. Much as I am coming to enjoy cooking and eating my own cooking, the reality of my work life is that I can't do it every day. For me the gift of Suppers has been getting support while I establish good new habits like planning ahead.

Recipe - Easy Basic Black Beans

Ingredients:

- One pound black beans, sorted, washed, and soaked overnight in 2 quarts water
- Optional: One piece of kombu
- one small jar tomato sauce with no sweeteners
- one small jar salsa with no sweeteners
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- Optional: Up to 4 cups of high fiber vegetables like cabbage
- Salt to taste

Directions:

Discard the soaking water and put about two quarts of fresh water in the beans, enough to cover by an inch

Add kombu, if using, to increase digestibility, simmer on medium low

Add tomato sauce, salsa, chili powder and optional vegetables and simmer 60 – 90 minutes or until beans are soft and the water has most cooked off

Salt at the end only or beans may not soften properly

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Recipe - Kale with Pine Nuts and Raisins

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
- 3/4 lb kale washed, stems removed and shredded
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cups water
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/3 cup raisins
- sea salt

Directions:

Bring water to boil in a skillet with a tight fitting lid, add kale and cook for approximately 5 minutes or until the kale is just tender, drain and set aside

Rinse out the skillet, dry, add olive oil and heat over medium heat, add garlic and saute for 30 seconds, add raisins and stir for about 30 seconds

Add pine nuts and stir for another 30 seconds or so

The raisins should be glossy and slightly puffed

Add kale, stir, season and saute until heated through

Season with salt