

ZEN RIVER COOKBOOK

MOUTH-WATERING
VEGETARIAN
RECIPES

BY
TAMARA MYOHO GABRYSCH





These delicious recipes have been created, tested, and compiled by a Zen cook with decades of experience. The colour photos are beautiful and make you want to head for the kitchen and start chopping. It is rare to find a book that helps you cook healthy, tasty food for large groups. An unexpected treat is the discovery that the recipes are interwoven with inspiring Zen teachings.

– Jan Chozen Bays, MD, is a Zen master in the White Plum lineage of the late master Taizan Maezumi Roshi. Her many books include Mindful Eating: Free Yourself from Overeating and Other Unhealthy Relationships with Food (Shambhala 2009)

The Zen River Cookbook is the work of a Zen Master. It is filled with flavourful recipes, thoughtful instruction, and beautiful images. This book captures the simplicity and dynamic range of a true Zen kitchen with variety, clarity, and nourishment for the body, mind, and spirit.

– Diane Musho Hamilton is an award-winning professional mediator, author, facilitator, and teacher of Zen at Two Arrows Zen and Integral Spirituality. Diane is the author of Everything is Workable: A Zen Approach to Conflict Resolution, (Shambhala, 2013). She is also featured in The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women (Wisdom, 2014).

The Zen River Cookbook is a wonderful collection of practical, accessible, creative, and delicious recipes. They lend themselves to the preparation of simple or substantial meals for the family, for a dinner party, or for a large function. This is good food – that it is vegetarian is not an issue. The recipes are well developed, tested over many years in the most demanding conditions, and they are reliable. They also represent the author’s Zen sensibility and illustrate a concern for good nutrition, the environment, minimum waste, and a delight in the delicious! I am eagerly awaiting my own copy of The Zen River Cookbook.

– David Scott, internationally published author and journalist specialising in food, travel, and Buddhist practice. His many books include The Three Bowl Cookbook, Explorer Japan (Fodor and the AA), and Simply Zen, Designs for Harmonious Living.

Tamara Myoho Gabrysch is a master Tenzo who generously and joyfully shares her cooking knowledge and love of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in The Zen River Cookbook. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to experience the elegance of a Zen kitchen in every meal. There are clear, delicious, and flavourful recipes for every part of the day and for every occasion. Beautiful photographs, along with useful instruction and thoughtful reflections, enhance this comprehensive introduction to the principles and practice of mindful cooking. Retreat cooks will appreciate The Zen River Cookbook as an essential kitchen resource, while home cooks will enjoy Myoho Sensei’s skilled guidance for making delicious meals to delight friends and family.

– Julia Kanro Sati, Tenzo, Two Arrows Zen

Zen River Cookbook
Mouth-watering Vegetarian Recipes
by
Tamara Myoho Gabrysch

First edition, second printing
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Editorial assistance: Cordelia Mukan Mc Kenna and Wynn Seishin Wright

Printed and bound by Chris Russell Creatief Productiecentrum, Groningen, The Netherlands

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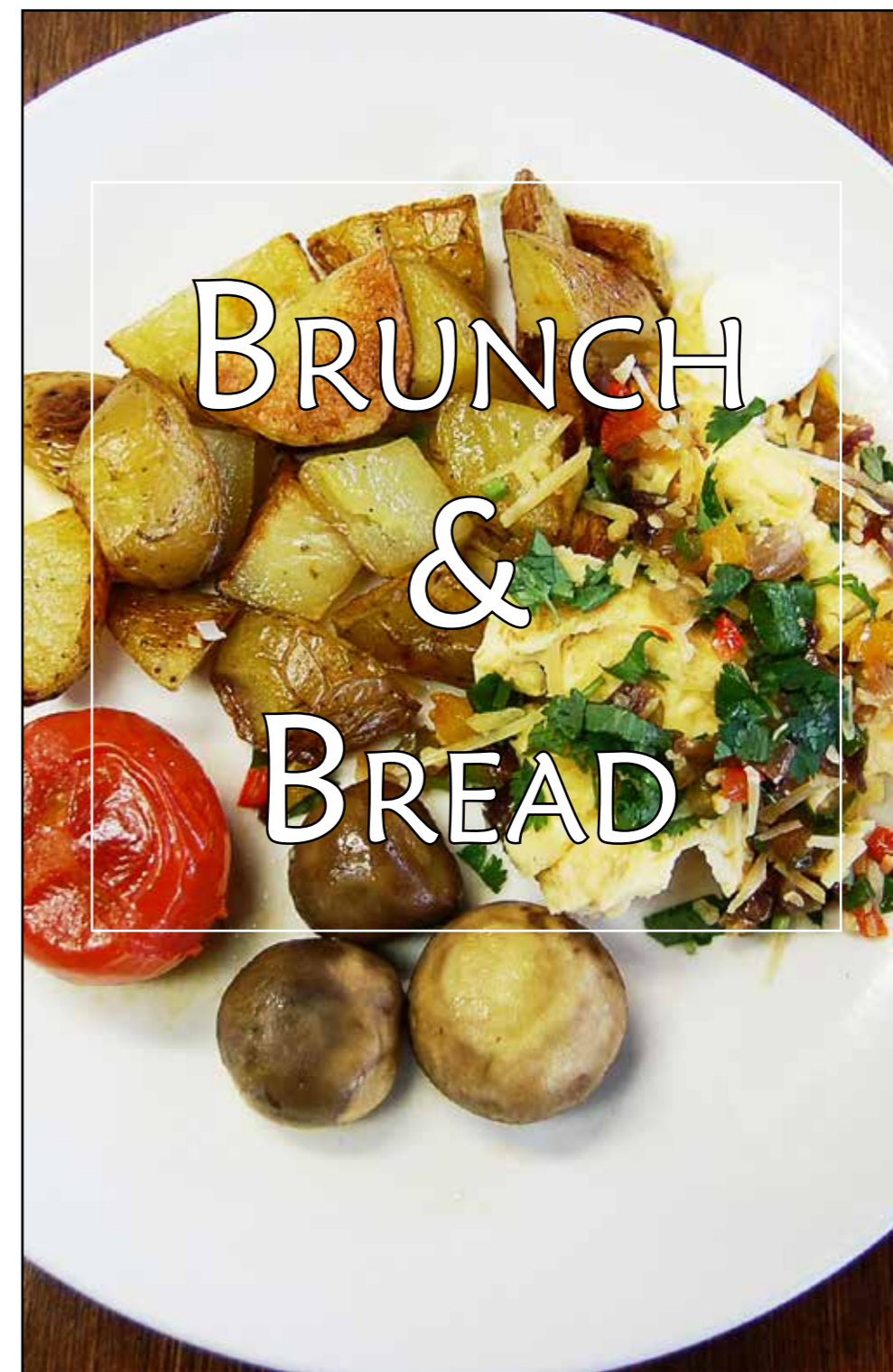
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Singing Potatoes

"You're right – they do sing!" said Liz. And if singing potatoes didn't show up for breakfast on Wednesday, Anjo's favourite day, Wednesday would somehow not be Wednesday. Try this recipe using organic Maris Piper potatoes.

1½ kilos (3 pounds) potatoes, about 300 g (2 medium) potatoes per serving
3 tablespoons olive oil

- * Preheat the oven to 210 °C (410 °F).
- * Clean and large-dice the potatoes and remove excess moisture by patting with a clean, dry dish towel.
- * Coat in olive oil and place in a single layer onto an oiled baking tray.
- * Put on a low rack in the oven. After about 20 minutes, when the sound is a gentle sizzle, take the potatoes out of the oven and, being careful not to break them, flip the potatoes by sliding a flat, heatproof spatula underneath them. Jiggle the tray to distribute the potatoes evenly. Ensure that each piece of potato has contact with the baking tray. Return to the oven and flip them again in another 20 minutes to ensure an even colour.
- * Bake for 45–60 minutes, depending on your oven, the size of the tray and the amount of potatoes. They are ready to serve when they turn a lovely golden brown colour and "sing." Take them out of the oven. If necessary, place potatoes on paper towels for a few seconds to absorb excess oil.
- * Serve immediately while hot and crisp.
- * Keeps warm in the oven for a short time, but don't pile the potatoes up or cover the tray tightly as they may lose their crispness.
- * Serve alongside scrambled eggs, baked mushrooms, and fried tomatoes.



Scrambled Eggs

Should you wonder at the addition of corn starch to the scrambled eggs, it so happened that each time the eggs were scrambled with milk, the whey would slowly separate and collect in the bottom of the serving dish. Adding a little starch, I discovered, prevented that from happening. It doesn't seem to affect the texture or the taste. Salt is omitted to keep the eggs somewhat fluffy – they can easily be salted later.

10 medium free-range eggs
80 ml (1/3 cup) milk
1 level teaspoon corn starch
Olive oil for frying

- * Crack the eggs into a tall measuring jug. Whisk the milk with the corn or potato starch in a small bowl, then blend everything together with an immersion blender until the eggs have a nice head of foam.
- * In a nonstick frying pan on low-medium flame, heat a tablespoon of oil. Test the heat with a small drop of egg – it should sizzle and make a star shape in the oil.
- * Pour in the eggs and let them rest until the bottom sets in an even layer. Using a heatproof spatula or flat, wooden spoon, draw the eggs away from the edges of the frying pan into the middle. Work clockwise around the frying pan and allow any uncooked egg to flow back to the edge of the pan. Continue to pull the eggs into the middle until nothing flows back to the edge. It should look like a large omelette.
- * Next, using the spatula or wooden spoon, break the eggs into four equal pieces, flip over and let them rest for 10–12 seconds. They should have a light golden colour. Remove from the heat and serve right away. If you need to keep them warm for some time, place the eggs in a bowl, loosely covered with foil, over a pan of boiled water.
- * If you need to cook the eggs in batches, brush the pan clean with a wooden spoon, add some more oil and commence with the next round.



Fried Tomatoes

6 large or 12 small ripe vine tomatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil
Sprinkle of sea salt

- * Slice big tomatoes in half across the middle so that the stem and base of the tomato are on the top and bottom, or keep small ones whole.
- * Coat a skillet with a thin layer of olive oil, dip the open side of the cut tomatoes into the olive oil, and turn with open sides up, or roll small ones around the oil to coat. Cook on a low flame for 20–25 minutes or until the skins begin to split. Cover with a lid for a scant 5 minutes to finish. Serve with a sprinkle of coarse ground sea salt.



Pan-Fried Breakfast Mushrooms

Fried mushrooms and tomatoes served alongside scrambled eggs and tinned baked beans are traditional elements of a cooked English breakfast. At Zen River, we skip the beans but add American-style baked potatoes along with a Tex-mex twist on the condiment tray. "West meets West."

250 g (2 1/2 cups) small mushrooms
1–2 tablespoons olive oil
Pinch of sea salt

- * Clean the mushrooms and trim the stems, leaving them whole.
- * Brush the olive oil onto the bottom of a wide skillet. Put in the mushrooms and stir to coat them with the oil. It will absorb quickly.
- * Put over a low-medium flame and cook until the mushrooms begin to brown, about 15–20 minutes. Turn now and then to allow even cooking. After 15–20 minutes, add the salt, cover, and cook for a further 5 minutes.



Spicy Poached Pears

This recipe is inspired by the flavours of Norfolk Punch found in England – an old and amazingly healthy herbal tonic containing over thirty herbs and spices. Norfolk Punch is difficult to come by, especially in the Netherlands, so here is an ever so simplified homemade version using a tisane of herbs and spices found in our spice cupboard. Mixed with pears, the juice is delicious, but feel free to enjoy it as a hot drink without the pears too.



500 ml (4 cups) red grape juice
30 g (3 tablespoons) fresh ginger
1 x 12 cm (5") cinnamon stick
6 whole cloves
3 star anise
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 tablespoon blackstrap molasses, or treacle
1 teaspoon ground liquorice root (or a dried stem of liquorice root)
1 teaspoon rosemary
½ teaspoon fennel
½ teaspoon thyme
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom or 6 green cardamom pods, broken open
Pinch of black pepper
5–6 firm conference or hard-cooking pears

- * Peel and mince the ginger and put in a pan together with the grape juice, cinnamon, cloves and star anise, and simmer on a low flame for 20 minutes.
- * Add the lemon juice, zest, molasses, and remaining spices. Bring to a boil, turn off, cover, and steep for 15 minutes. Strain through a tea strainer and put the spiced juice into a wide pot.
- * Peel (or not as you prefer), core, and cut the pears (or core from the bottom and leave them whole for a festive presentation).
- * Add the pears to the seasoned juice and bring back almost to a boil, taking care to stir the pears for even cooking.
- * If using soft pears, as soon as the juice boils, remove from the heat and serve immediately.
- * If the pears are hard-cooking pears, then simmer 10–20 minutes, until a wooden skewer can easily be inserted through the widest part.

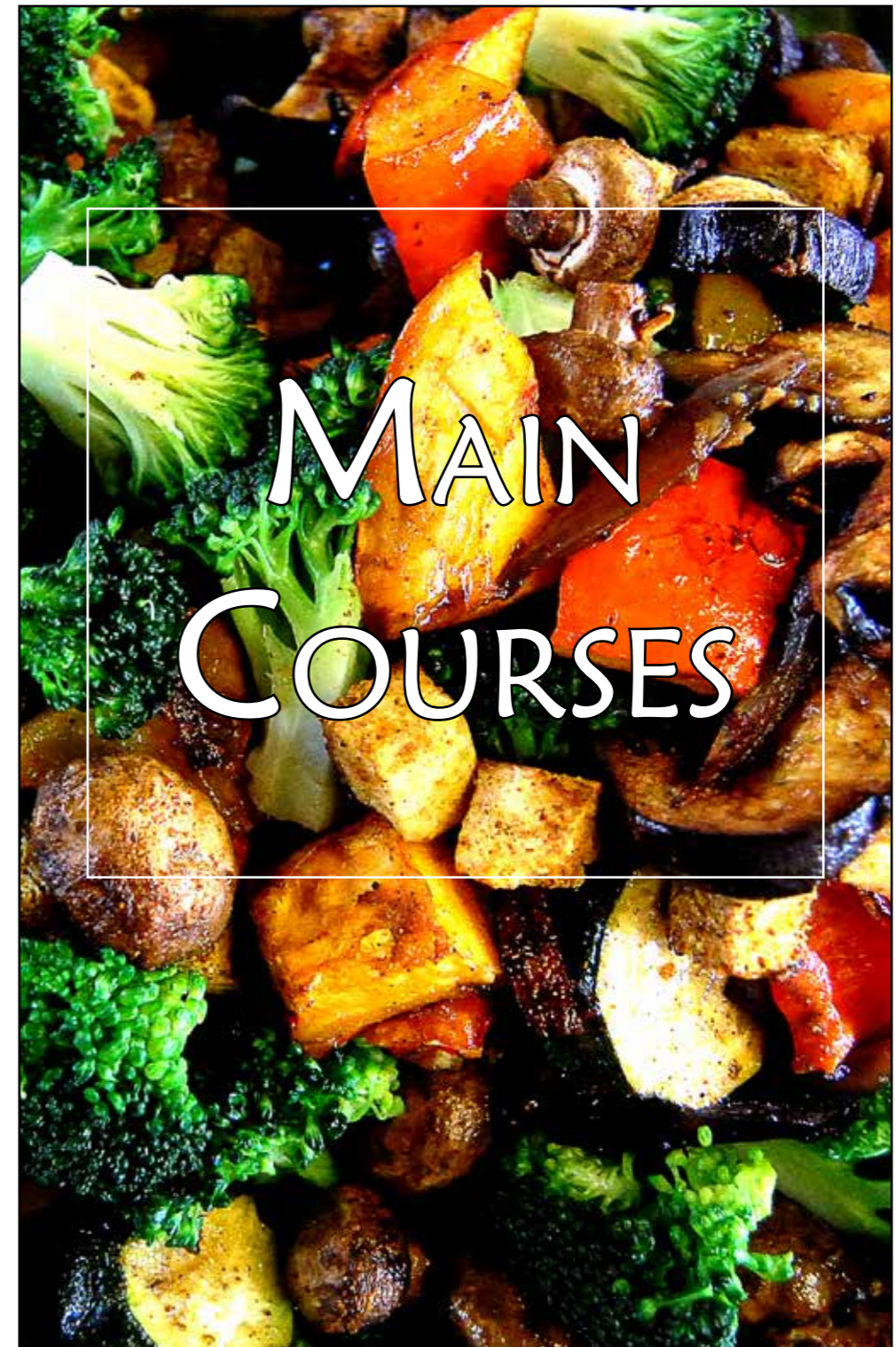


Overripe Spotted Bananas

Besides turning those spotty, overripe, black skinned bananas into banana bread, cakes or smoothies, try this masterpiece conjured up by Tenkei in his early days as tenzo in Bar Harbor when he tackled the mighty Indonesian "rice table." This is a feast of up to forty or more tasty side dishes served with various kinds of rice. With the help of an Indonesian friend in Holland, Tenkei got all the spices needed to cook up a memorable meal. One of the sweeter side dishes was this one based on Pisang Goreng, a fried banana or plantain treat found in night markets throughout Southeast Asia. Serve with quark or yogurt for breakfast, or with ice cream as dessert. Sweeten with cinnamon along with honey or brown sugar.

1 teaspoon butter
4-6 ripe, spotted bananas
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon honey or brown sugar

- * Preheat the oven to 180 °C (360 °F).
- * Melt the butter in a small saucepan.
- * Peel the bananas and place on a baking tray covered with parchment.
- * Brush the bananas with the melted butter.
- * Sprinkle with cinnamon and brown sugar or honey.
- * Bake for about 20 minutes until soft but not mushy.



Oven Roasted Vegetables with Tempeh

It all started in the winter of 2000. Hojosan, our mentor, friend, and dharma uncle from Tokyo, was visiting us in Amsterdam for the first time. Because he was our very special guest, we went to the nicest restaurant we knew on the Lindengracht, Toscanini. A large group of us sat around a square table covered with a crisp, white tablecloth, and the appetizers that appeared were two large platters of thinly sliced, grilled vegetables. It was delicious.

One day several months later, the only things sitting in the Zen River fridge were a random assortment of vegetables. While wondering what to do with them, I recalled that evening at Toscanini, and although we didn't have a grill, this recipe came into being. After ten years of various seasoning combinations, it is now perfected and is one of the mainstays of the weekday meal.

When this dish is served for lunch during sesshin, Shugetsu always passes by the kitchen clasping her hands over her tummy with a look of happiness in her eyes. That is what "oven veggies," as we fondly refer to them, can do!

1 small aubergine (eggplant)
1 medium courgette (zucchini)
1 medium carrot
½ red bell pepper
150 g (1½ cups) pumpkin and/or sweet potato
200 g (1 small crown) broccoli
125 g (1¼ cups) button mushrooms
1 medium red onion
4 medium cloves garlic
200 g (1¼ cups) tempeh
1 tablespoon dried basil
3½ tablespoons olive oil, divided
4 tablespoons soy sauce, divided
1 teaspoon salt
Pinch of clove

- * Preheat the oven to 210 °C (425 °F).
- * Cut the aubergine into thick rounds. Toss through 1 teaspoon of salt and set aside for 30 minutes.
- * Cut the courgette into thick rounds.
- * Cut the carrot into thin slices at a 45 degree angle.
- * Deseed and cut the bell peppers into triangular wedges.
- * Deseed and large-dice the pumpkin, or large-dice the sweet potato.
- * Cut the broccoli head into florets. Peel the whole stem making sure to get under the woody part. Slice the stem into thin rounds. Set aside.
- * Clean and trim the mushrooms leaving them whole.
- * Peel and slice the red onion into large wedges.
- * Peel and mince the garlic.

- * Cut the tempeh block, first into thin slices, and then into threes.
- * Rinse the salted aubergine and pat dry with a clean drying towel.

- * In a large bowl, coat all the vegetables, except for the broccoli, with the garlic, basil, and 3 tablespoons each of olive oil and soy sauce. Spread in a single layer onto an oiled, nonstick baking sheet.
- * Combine the tempeh with 1 tablespoon soy sauce, ½ tablespoon olive oil, and a pinch of cloves. Scatter on top of the vegetables.
- * Place on a lower rack in the oven and bake for 30 minutes, or until a toothpick slides easily through the aubergine and pumpkin.
- * Bring a large pot of salted water to a rapid boil. Drop in the broccoli florets and stems and quickly return to a light boil. Drain.
- * Layer the baked vegetables with the broccoli onto a large platter.
- * Serve with Cashew Nut Dressing (p. <?>) and Parmesan cheese. Complement with Pear and Rocket Salad (p. <?>).





Big Fat White Beans in Red, Red Sauce

I was inspired while visiting a Mexican friend of ours in Madrid. This fresh tomato and red bell pepper sauce came about after indulging in her homemade huevos rancheros. There are no chillies in this version, so it is rather mild. The beans came later and were simply the perfect contrast to the loveliness of the sauce. Rocket provides some fresh green colour to accentuate the reds, but skip it if you prefer something simpler.

350 g (2¼ cups) dried large white broad beans
6 medium, ripe tomatoes
5 medium cloves garlic
2 medium red onions
2 red bell peppers



2 tablespoons olive oil
1–2 teaspoons lemon zest
½ teaspoon chilli powder
½ teaspoon paprika powder
Dash of smoked paprika powder (Pimentón de la Vera)
Sea salt to taste
70 g (1 cup) rocket (arugula) or fresh spinach leaves

* Soak the beans overnight in plenty of water. The next day, drain, cover with ample fresh water and cook for about 1½ hours, or until tender, adding more water as needed. To cook in a pressure cooker, cover with 3 cm (1½") of water and cook at high pressure for about 25–30 minutes.

* Prick the tomatoes with a sharp knife and place in a heatproof bowl. Cover with boiling water and wait for the peel to split, anywhere between 30 seconds and 3 minutes, depending on the size and ripeness of the tomatoes. Drain, peel, and slice into quarters.

* Peel the garlic and leave the cloves whole.

* Peel and slice the red onions into large pieces.

* Slice the bell peppers into large pieces.

* In a stew pot on medium flame, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil and sauté the red onions, red bell peppers, and the garlic cloves until they all caramelize.

* Next, add the tomatoes and simmer for 20 minutes.

* Whizz with an immersion blender until smooth. Season with lemon zest, chilli powder, and paprika powder.

* Drain the cooked broad beans and add to the red sauce. Simmer for 10 minutes or more to marry the flavours. Salt to taste.

* Just before serving, stir in the smoked paprika powder and top with fresh rocket, torn into short pieces. Serve with pasta and Parmesan cheese.





Chickpea Tajine with Mint & Orange

This Moroccan themed recipe found it's way to sesshins a long time ago, thanks to my husband, Tenkei, and our dharma friends Catherine and Michel. Twenty-five years later, this recipe is still going strong. Having undergone a variety of face lifts, it's finally settled on an orange and mint infused sauce. It's simultaneously a little bit piquant, a little bit spicy and a little bit fruity.

3 medium carrots	250 g (1½ cups) cooked chickpeas
1 medium courgette (zucchini)	rinsed and drained
1 medium red onion	1 teaspoon honey or brown sugar
2 red bell peppers	(optional)
25 g (2½ tablespoons) fresh ginger	2-3 teaspoons dried mint
4 medium cloves garlic	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 small bunch of parsley	½ teaspoon ground cardamom
75 g (¼ cup) prunes	½ teaspoon ground coriander
2 tablespoons olive oil	½ teaspoon ground cumin
250 ml (1 cup) orange juice	Sea salt to taste
400 ml (1½ cups) chopped canned tomatoes (about 1 can)	
1 tablespoon tomato paste	

* If preferred, peel the carrots; then slice them into triangular chunks. Do this by cutting on the diagonal, then rolling the carrot a half turn and slicing on the diagonal again, repeat.

* Cut the courgette into thick half slices.

* Cut the red onion and peppers into thick wedges.

* Peel and mince the ginger and garlic.

* Plunge the carrots into salted, boiling water until al dente, about 1-2 minutes. Drain and set aside. (Reserve the cooking water for soup.)

* Remove the tough stems from the parsley and chop the leaves roughly.

* Remove any pits from the prunes and slice them into quarters.

* In a stew pot, heat the olive oil over a medium flame. Add the red onions and bell peppers and stir-fry until caramelized on the edges.

* Next, add the cooked carrots and courgette and stir-fry for about a minute.

* Put in the garlic and ginger and stir-fry for 1 minute, or until fragrant.

* Stir in the orange juice, canned tomatoes and tomato paste, chickpeas, carrots, prunes, mint, honey or brown sugar if using, and all the spices.

* Simmer together for 10-15 minutes.

* Salt to taste, adjusting the spices if needed.

* Garnish with the chopped parsley.

* Serve with Couscous (p. <?>) alongside Yogurt Garlic Sauce (p. <?>).



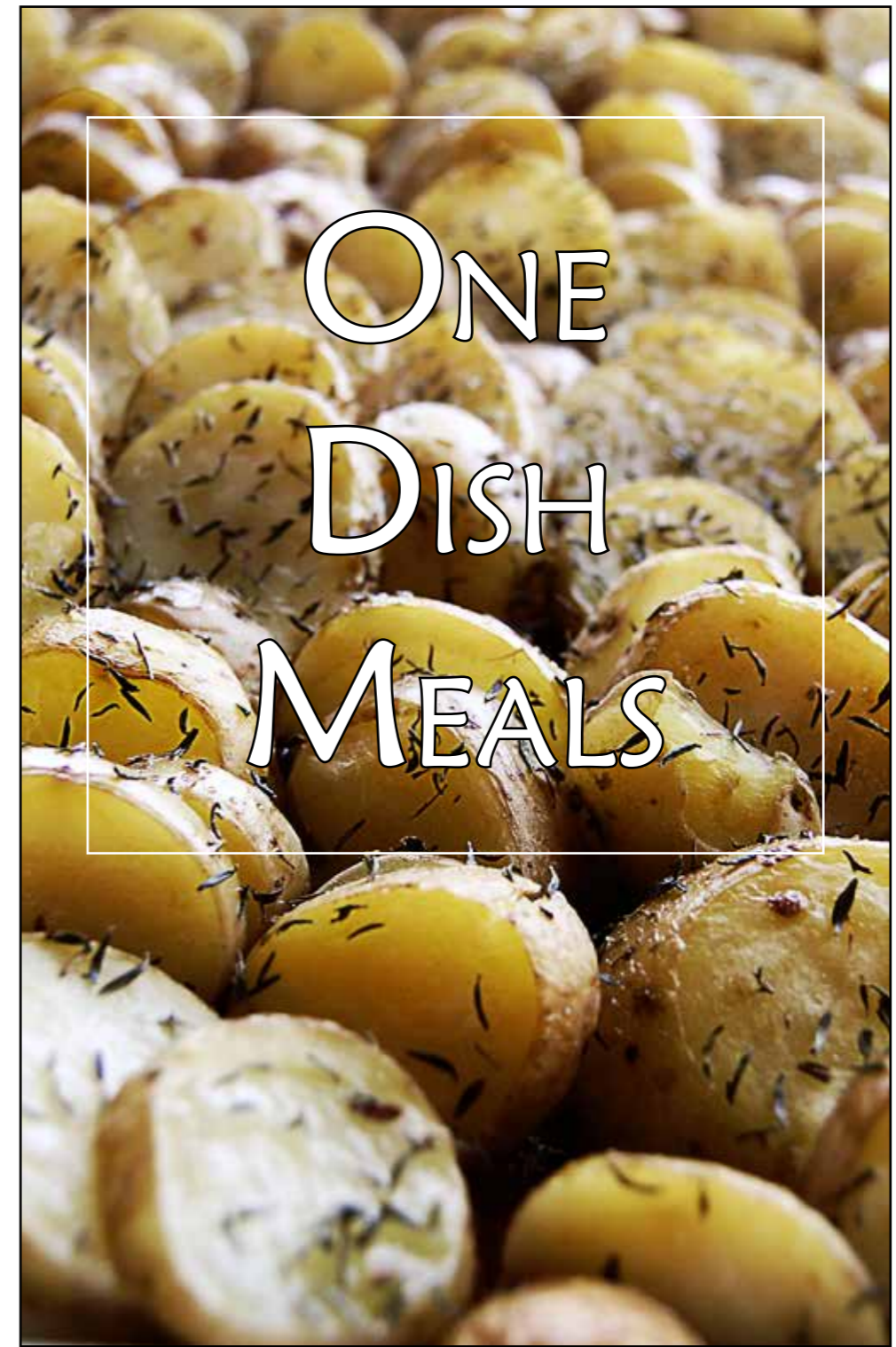
Cauliflower Coconut Cream Karma Korma

One of my favourites from student days was the vegetable korma found in the night haunts of Indian restaurants that stayed open until dawn. This recipe is an accidental vegan approach to its namesake. Mild and spicy, the pale creamy sauce is a lovely canvas for the white cauliflower, red peppers, black raisins, purple onions, and yellow chickpeas. If more servings are needed, a few cooked carrots, potatoes, or green beans work well and add a touch of sunshine orange or summer green freshness.

1 small cauliflower
 1 red bell pepper
 1 medium red onion
 40 g (4 tablespoons) fresh ginger
 4 medium cloves garlic
 25–30 green cardamom pods, or 1½–2 teaspoons ground
 400 ml (1½ cups) coconut milk
 400 ml (1½ cups) water
 175 g (1¼ cups) cashew nuts
 Pinch cayenne pepper, to taste
 250 g (1½ cups) cooked chickpeas, rinsed and drained
 3 tablespoons black raisins
 3–4 bay leaves
 2 tablespoons sunflower or olive oil

- * Cut the cauliflower into bite-sized florets.
- * Deseed and slice the red pepper into triangular wedges.
- * Peel and slice the onions into moon-shaped wedges, cutting along the grain.
- * Peel and mince the ginger and garlic.
- * Grind the whole cardamom pods in a dedicated coffee grinder or with a pestle and mortar until the hulls fall off and the seeds are coarsely ground. Remove the hulls.
- * Heat the oil in a stew pot on medium flame. Add and stir-fry the red pepper and red onions until they are caramelized on the edges, about 8 minutes. Remove from the stew pot and set aside.
- * In the same stew pot and using the same oil, add the ginger and garlic together with the cardamom. Stir-fry for one minute.
- * When fragrant, add the coconut milk, water, cashew nuts, and cayenne pepper. Continue to heat and blend until smooth with an immersion blender.
- * Add the cooked chickpeas, raisins, and the bay leaves.
- * Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently, covered, for 10 minutes or more, stirring often to prevent sticking.
- * Add the cooked red pepper and red onion. Salt to taste.

- * Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and quickly drop in half the cauliflower. On a high flame, bring back to a boil, simmer one minute or until crispy tender, and then scoop out with a slotted spoon. Put the cooked cauliflower in a colander to drip dry. Repeat with the rest of the cauliflower.
- * Add the parboiled cauliflower to the cashew nut sauce.
- * Serve with white or brown rice, and Spiced Apple Chutney (p. <?>).





Spinach, Ricotta & Tomato Pasta

Simple and delicious, the inspiration behind this little recipe is spanakopita, a Greek phyllo pastry filled with chopped spinach and feta cheese. Take away the phyllo, and presto, you end up with a fine, quick, and easy sauce for pasta! If ricotta cheese is not available, substitute with cottage cheese whizzed in a food processor until smooth. Just be careful not to cook either cheese as they may separate and become grainy. Spice up the flavour with a bit of crumbled feta cheese. This is a Zen River standby when faced with so many mouths to feed and so little time.

300 g (3½ cups) penne pasta
4 ripe medium tomatoes
A few olives
4–6 cloves of garlic
2 tablespoons whole almonds
2 tablespoons olive oil, plus a little extra for the pasta
300 g (10 cups) chopped fresh spinach, or frozen and thawed (1⅓ cups)
1 teaspoon dried rosemary
250 g (1 cup) ricotta cheese (or cottage cheese blended smooth in a food processor)
75 g (½ cup) crumbled feta cheese (optional)
1 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
Sea salt to taste
Small bunch fresh chopped parsley (optional)

- * Prick the tomatoes with a sharp knife and place in a heatproof bowl. Cover with boiling water and wait for the peel to split, anywhere between 30 seconds and 3 minutes, depending on the size and ripeness of the tomatoes. Drain, remove the peel, and medium-dice.
 - * Slice the olives.
 - * Peel and mince the garlic.
 - * Roast the almonds in a dry skillet and chop roughly into thirds.
- ~
- * Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the package. When finished, drain and toss with some olive oil.
 - * While the pasta is cooking, heat the olive oil in a stew pot on medium flame and sauté the garlic until golden.
 - * Add the spinach and dried rosemary. Sauté gently, being careful not to let it boil.
 - * Add the tomatoes, olives, black pepper, and salt. Remove from the heat. Stir in the ricotta, cottage, and/or feta cheese.
 - * Combine with the pasta and sprinkle with chopped almonds. Garnish with parsley.
 - * Serve with Parmesan cheese and freshly ground black pepper.

Quesadilla

At a celebratory party with the sangha, we were served quesadilla, which are essentially a toasted sandwich with Tex-mex flair. These were filled with a plethora of ingredients; piquant chilli, broccoli, courgette and onions; French cheese, rocket and pine nuts. You name it, anything goes. The filling is up to you – just don't overfill them. This version is a classic and wonderful just as is.

8 round flour or corn tortillas
125 g (½ cup) sour cream or crème fraîche
250 g (1 cup) tomato salsa (commercial will do, or home made salsa thickened with a little tomato paste)
150 g–200 g (1½–1¾ cups) grated cheese
20 g small bunch fresh coriander (cilantro)

- * Using a spatula, spread one side of a tortilla first with a thin layer of sour cream followed by salsa, grated cheese, and coriander leaves, or with a filling of your choice. Leave ½ cm (¼") edge free of filling to give room for the cheese to melt. Place a second tortilla on top, like a tortilla sandwich.
- * Heat a seasoned black or cast iron frying pan on a medium flame without any oil, put in the quesadilla and fry until the edges start to curl and crisp, the cheese melts, and the tortilla shows a few golden patches, about 1 minute.
- * Flip with a metal spatula and toast the other side, usually half the time it took for the first side to toast. The hotter the pan gets, the quicker they cook, so pay close attention. Cut into triangular slices and serve immediately.

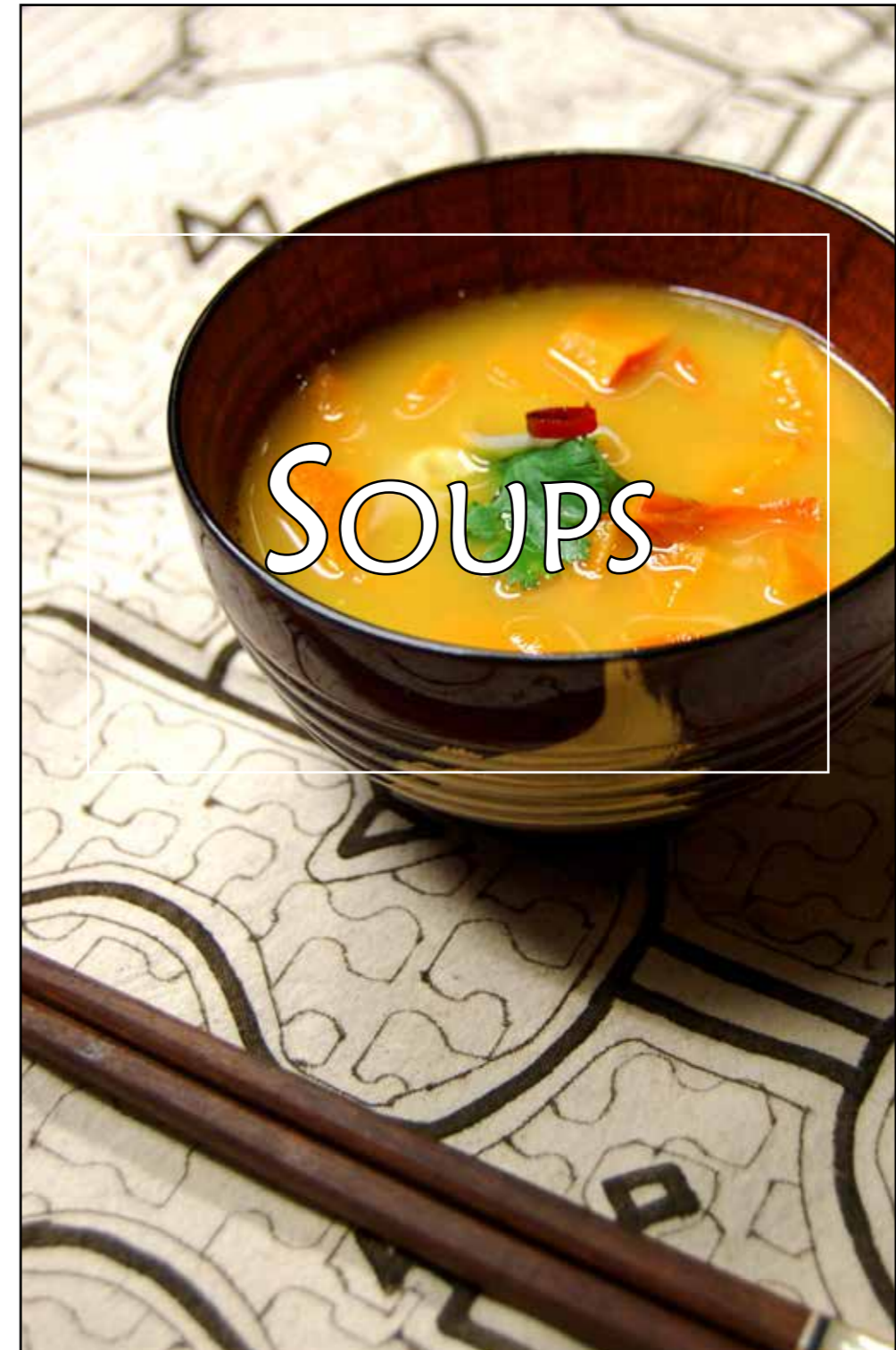


Gomasio

Gomasio is a wonderfully addictive condiment. Used extensively in Japan for breakfast, it has become one of the great additions to most Zen temple across Europe and America. Make it as salty as you like. A Japanese friend once told me that for the best flavour, always grind gomasio with a ceramic pestle and mortar.

250 g (1¾ cups) sesame seeds
1 teaspoon salt

- * Place the sesame seeds in a frying pan without any oil. Turn on medium flame and stir-fry until the seeds begin to pop, the colour changes to a light golden hue, and the fragrance becomes lovely. Stir in the salt.
- * Cool, and then grind with a pestle and mortar, or for about 15 seconds in a food processor. (Grind just until the seeds are broken since grinding them too long will release the oils and make the gomasio sticky.)
- * Serve with any meal. It goes particularly well with any breakfast porridge.





Miso Soup with Ginger

One morning at Kirigayaji, Hojosan's Tokyo temple, I decided to help by making the breakfast miso soup – a rather daring prospect, making miso soup for the Japanese! As a ginger lover, without thinking twice, I grated a little into the stock. What a surprise when all the staff arrived and peered into the kitchen to see what was happening. "High point!" said one. Then, in cheerful disbelief and amazement that anyone would put ginger in miso soup, all took bowls of it, and quickly finished it was. If not available in larger supermarkets, most of the ingredients can be found in Asian markets and health food stores. Adjust the amount of miso to suit your taste. Some like it delicate and watery, others dark and salty. Miso comes as sweet (white), salty (red), and very salty (black or *hatchi* in Japanese).

100 g (6 tablespoons) red (*aka*) or white (*shiro*) miso, or to taste
 250 ml (1 cup) cold water
 100 g (1 cup) white button mushrooms
 100 g (½ cup) soft/silken tofu
 10 g (1 tablespoon) fresh ginger
 1 stem green onion
 7 cm (3") square of konbu seaweed (dried flat seaweed)
 3–4 dried shitake mushrooms (20 g)
 1 tablespoon mirin (or ½ teaspoon rice vinegar and ½ teaspoon sugar)
 1 tablespoon sake (or dry sherry, or white wine)
 1¼ litres (5 cups) water



- * Whisk the miso and cold water into a smooth paste. Set aside.
- * Clean and cut the button mushrooms into wafer thin slices.
- * Handling with great care, drain and small-dice the silken tofu.
- * Peel and finely grate the ginger.
- * Clean and slice the green onion into wafer thin slices.



- * Make the Japanese soup stock, which is called *dashi*, by bringing the water to a boil in a large soup pot with the konbu, dried shitake mushrooms, mirin, sake, and ginger.
- * Simmer the dashi for 15–20 minutes, then scoop out the shitake and the konbu. Cover and continue to simmer on low flame.
- * Cut the konbu into small squares. Small-dice the shitake - cutting away any hard stems - and return both to the dashi.
- * Add the tofu, being careful not to break it.
- * Stir in the miso and check the seasoning. If desired, thin an extra spoonful of miso with a little of the soup and then stir it back into the pot.
- * Heat the miso soup, but don't let it boil. (High heat destroys the healthy enzymes in miso and alters the flavour.) Stir in the button mushrooms and turn off the flame. Garnish with the green onions and serve immediately.



Spectacular Pumpkin Soup

“Spectacular!” It was served during sesshin, a time when long zazen can hone the humblest of taste buds, which may account for the spectacular reception. For the same effect, besides a healthy dose of zazen, be sure to use small, dark orange pumpkins, like sugar or kabocha. (Big pumpkins used for Halloween are edible, but they don’t have much spunk or texture and are watery at best. Reserve those for spectacular, candlelit decorations dedicated to hungry ghosts and lost spirits!) The coriander and fresh, sliced chillies lend a Thai accent. You can also substitute the lemon zest with 3 trimmed and peeled lemon grass stalks dropped into the stock water (remove before serving).

20 g (2 tablespoons) fresh ginger
1 medium clove garlic
1½ kg (4–5 cups or 2 pounds) sugar
or kabocha pumpkin, or butternut
squash
1 tablespoon sunflower oil
1 litre (4 cups) water
400 ml (1½ cups) coconut milk
80g (½ cup) creamed coconut

GARNISH

6 sprigs fresh coriander (cilantro)
1 red chilli pepper, any kind

AROMATICS

6–8 kaffir lime leaves (or a strip of
lime peel)
15 g (1½ tablespoons) palm sugar,
jaggery or brown sugar
1 teaspoon lemon zest (or 3 lemon
grass stalks)
1 level teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon ground cardamom
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch of ground red hot chilli pepper
1 teaspoon soy sauce
3–4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
Salt to taste



* Peel and mince the ginger and garlic.

* Wash the pumpkin. Peel if the skin is tough. Cut the pumpkins in half and remove the seeds with a spoon. Cut into quarters and then crosswise into 2 cm (1”) strips. Next, cut the strips into ½ cm (¼”) slices so that you end up with trapezoid shapes.



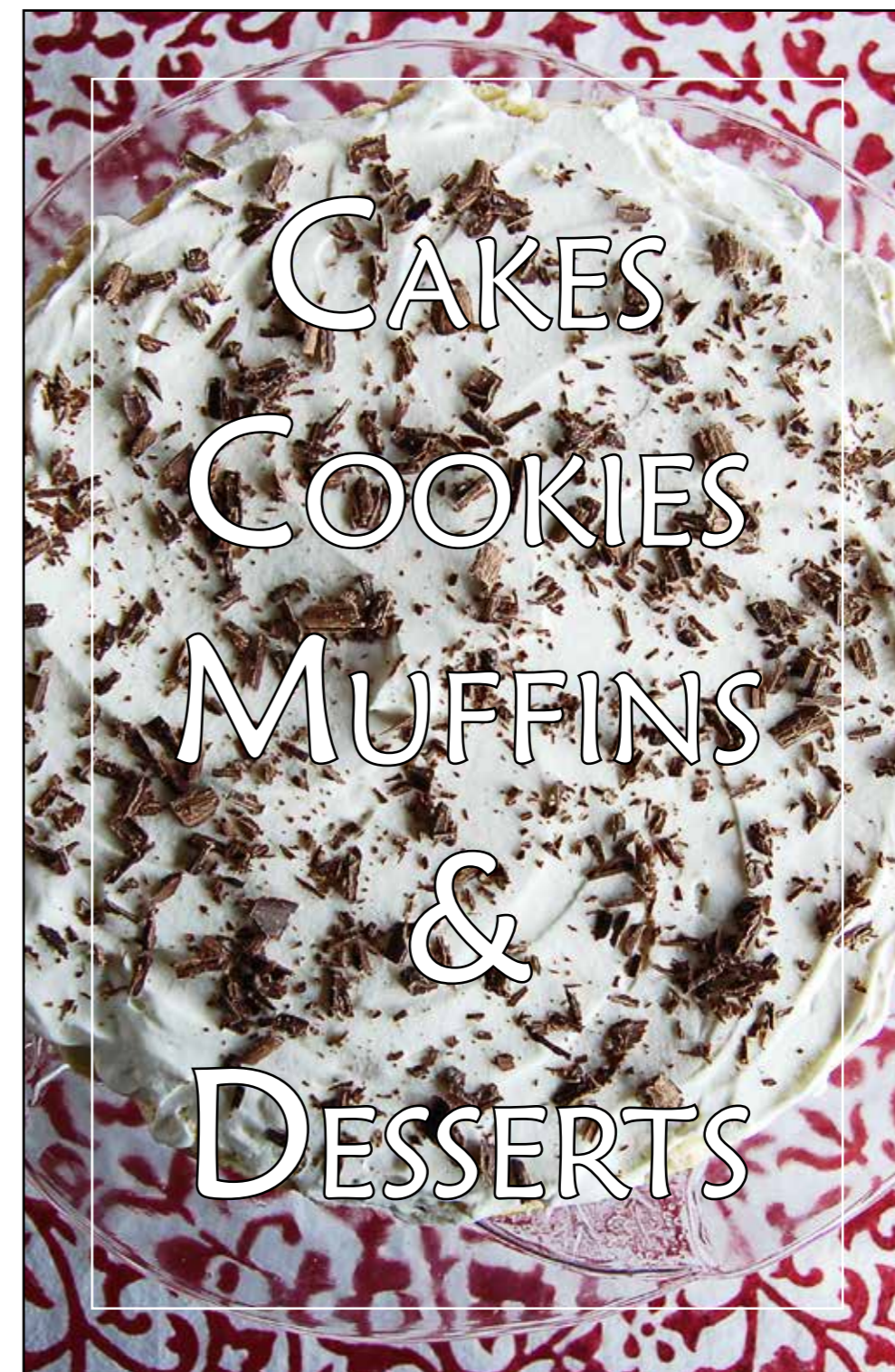
* In a stew pot on medium flame, heat the sunflower oil, and gently stir-fry the ginger and garlic until just fragrant but not coloured.

* Add 1 litre (4 cups) of water and the coconut milk, creamed coconut, lime leaves, palm sugar, lemon grass stalks (if using), turmeric, cardamom, cinnamon, chilli pepper, soy sauce, and salt. Bring to a boil and simmer for 1 minute to release the flavours.

* Add the pumpkin, return to a boil, reduce the flame and simmer until the pumpkin is soft, but not falling apart, about 5–8 minutes.

* Stir in the lemon zest (if using) and lemon juice. Heat and adjust the seasoning to taste. Remove the lime leaves.

* Remove the seeds from the red chilli pepper and slice into thin rounds. Roughly chop the fresh coriander and serve both with the soup as a garnish.



About Cakes & Cookies



Why do I find it easier, and quicker, to measure most cake recipes using the US standard system of measurements? Maybe living in the US for some time did it, where most things are measured by cups instead of grams. Perhaps Liz, the first cake baker at Zen River who dared to use the aging oven, also had an influence because she always measured using cups; or perhaps, to be honest, I never did get used to metric.

When I first started baking at Zen River, I was sure there must be a simple, underlying formula for cake recipes, even though all the recipes I followed were different. It took many a cake to discover that my suspicions were correct. Most cakes, muffins and cookies can be built around a 250 g block (4 sticks) of butter. Of course, 250 grams of butter would make rather a lot of cake or muffins in one batch, so each recipe here is divided to make 12 to 18 muffins or cookies, or one large cake or loaf.

The most important piece of advice for any aspiring cookie or cake baker is never to over mix the flour into the batter. Too much mixing releases gluten. Gluten is the protein in wheat that gives rise and elasticity to bread, but if released in a cake will result in a heavy, stodgy brick. So always fold in flour as lightly, gently, and quickly as possible. If using an electric mixer, then it should be mixed within 20 seconds, just long enough to combine everything while not releasing the gluten from the flour.

Zen River has a splendid old Quatfass stove, which someone once said should be in a museum by now. With its white enamel finish and old-fashioned knobs, it is simply adorable. The only snag is that there is no thermostat in the oven. The longer it's on, the hotter it gets. After singeing many a cake, I finally figured out the baking times. I am pleased to say that more often than not, a cake appears that is good enough to present to the table at coffee break!

Here are some more tips to help you bake presentable cakes:

- All spoon measures used a metric 5 ml measuring teaspoon, and a 15 ml measuring tablespoon. The cake recipes are listed using metric standard measurements followed by their US equivalents. For best results, stay with one or the other. Don't mix them up!
- Whole wheat flour can be substituted for white flour in all the recipes. The only difference is they will raise less and may need a few minutes longer in the oven to bake.
- Cakes are ready when a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean, the edges of the cake start to lift or pull away from the sides of the tin, and the cake springs back when touched. One's nose can also smell if a cake is ready.
- If you notice that your cakes regularly crack in the middle, next time try reducing the oven temperature to 170 °C (340 °F). Continue to bake until the edges start to pull away from the tin. Test for done-ness using a toothpick.
- Be careful to not open the oven door prematurely when baking as the cold air rushing in may cause it to collapse.
- For a moist cake, place a small oven dish filled with water on the bottom rack of the oven, which will create some steam during the baking process.



Apple Shortcake

This crispy shortcake base topped with cinnamon apples dredged in brown sugar is one dessert cake that is hard to resist – those who try usually fail. Enjoy!

SHORTCAKE BASE

110 g (½ cup) sugar
125 g (½ cup) butter, softened
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon of salt
315 g (2 cups) white flour

APPLE TOPPING

4 firm medium apples
6 tablespoons brown sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
Pinch of clove
100 g (¾ cup packed) raisins or sultanas
1 tablespoon walnuts (optional)

- * Preheat the oven to 190 °C (375 °F). Line the base of 25 cm (10”) spring-form cake tin with parchment paper and grease the sides with butter
- * Using an electric mixer, cream the sugar, butter, cinnamon and salt.
- * Add the flour and beat on a low speed until it resembles fine bread crumbs.
- * Place the crumb mixture in the pan and flatten well with the flat side of a wide metal spoon.

- * Peel and core the apples and cut into thin half-moons.
- * Combine the brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Sprinkle half of this mixture over the shortbread base. Scatter the nuts and raisins over the top, being careful not to let them fall in clusters.
- * Next, carefully arrange the apples in a decorative circular pattern. Press gently to minimize any gaps. Sprinkle with the remaining spice mixture.
- * Immediately place the apple shortcake in the middle of the oven for 30–35 minutes, or until the apples feel soft when a toothpick is inserted through them. Remove from the oven and carefully remove the band. Allow to cool completely.

Honey & Oatmeal Cookies

These are sweet reminders of leisurely mornings spent in American coffee houses pouring out our souls over steaming mugs of cappuccino and oversized oatmeal cookies, the cookie of choice for those of us who love to imagine oatmeal cookies can be healthy!

125 g (½ cup) butter
115 g (½ cup) demerara sugar
125 ml (¼ cup) honey
½ teaspoon salt
2 medium eggs
2 tablespoons raisins or sultanas
150 g (1½ cups) rolled oats
60 g (½ cup) white flour
2 teaspoons baking powder

* Preheat the oven to 180 °C (360 °F). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

* In a mixing bowl, cream together the butter, demerara sugar, honey, and salt with an electric mixer.

* Beat in one egg at a time and stir in the raisins.

* In a clean bowl, combine the oats, flour, and baking powder. Mix the dry ingredients into the butter and sugar until just combined.

* Drop spoonfuls of the batter onto the baking sheet, 4 cm (2") apart. Bake for 12–15 minutes, or until golden on the edges. If the cookies don't spread out much, try reducing the oven temperature a little next time.





Zen Vegetarian Cooking

Many of the recipes in this book are loosely based on Shojin-style cooking, more commonly referred to as Zen vegetarian cooking. And although Shojin makes use of a variety of Zen principles, it is also based on everyday common sense and no-nonsense logic, even to the point where I've caught myself saying, "Aha! I always thought so! Why didn't I notice that before?"



THE SIX TASTES, FIVE COLOURS & FIVE METHODS

Shojin-style cooking is based on the Buddhist precepts, especially doing no harm, but it is also characterized by simplicity and freshness. It was transmitted along with Buddhism from China to Japan, and now to the West. In brief, some key principles of Shojin style cooking are the six tastes – sweet, sour, salty, spicy, bitter, and delicate; the five colours – blacks (including purple), yellows, whites, reds, and greens; and the five cooking methods – frying, boiling, grilling or baking, steaming, and simply raw.

Wisely using the six tastes will carefully balance the flavours of a meal. For instance, the perfect balance of sugar with vinegar, lemon, or tomato will create a wonderful sweet and sour dish. The tartness of a salad dressing can be honed with honey or brightened with balsamic vinegar. And, a languishing curry dish can be tied together with a smattering of lemon juice and a spoonful of jaggery or brown sugar. The skilful use of salt and soy sauce can make a baked dish rich and savoury, or a mushroom soup deep and flavourful. Assorted curry powders and spices can bring the mundane lentil alive. Ground chills and peppercorns add pizzazz to a hot-sour bouillon, and a little fresh ginger or dill can paint a beautiful highlight on a simple carrot soup. Bitterness added in tiny proportions will accent the inherent sweetness of any dish. A pinch of lemon zest, a few bay leaves or lime leaves, a sprinkle of dill, or a touch of clove or paprika powder will do wonders to a bland, flat sauce. Delicate flavours are drawn out in broccoli and cauliflower when lightly steamed or boiled to perfection with a little sea salt, or in soups made with a clear broth. Subtlety is discovered in freshly cooked carrots tossed in olive oil and parsley, or in bulgur mixed with beans, corn, and a hint of chili.

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