

VEGETARIAN RECIPES  
FOR A NEW GENERATION



The  
HEART of  
the PLATE

Mollie Katzen

AUTHOR OF MOOSEWOOD COOKBOOK

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the PLATE

VEGETARIAN RECIPES  
FOR A NEW GENERATION

RECIPES, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY

Mollie Katzen

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[Yellow Coconut Rice with Chilies, Ginger, and Lime,](#) [Bulgur and Spaghetti,](#) [Soba Noodles with Butternut Squash, Miso, Smoked Tofu, Pumpkin Seeds, and Basil,](#) [Muhammara,](#) and [Chipotle Cream](#) adapted from *Mollie Katzen’s Vegetable Heaven: Over 200 Recipes for Uncommon Soups, Tasty Bites, Side Dishes, and Too Many Desserts* (Hyperion, 1997), used by permission of Hyperion.

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*This book is dedicated to Minnie Heller and Betty Katzen, whom I miss every day—and to Sam Black and Eve Shames. You are my heroes.*

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# Introduction

*Several decades ago, the recipe journals I had been keeping since my teens morphed into what eventually became the Moosewood Cookbook, reflecting my generation's search for creative alternatives to the traditional meat-and-potatoes American dinner plate. The cuisine, if it can be called that, grew out of a fascination with plant-based dishes from various cultures and an enthusiastic appreciation for a sense of kitchen craft reminiscent of our grandmothers.*

What made *Moosewood* noteworthy at the time, I think, in addition to the food itself, was the idea that vegetarian dishes could comprise an entire dinner (or even a lifestyle), relegating meat to occasional status or possibly allowing us to abandon it altogether. In addition to presenting meatless possibilities, the *Moosewood Cookbook*, with its emphasis on cooking from scratch, was considered doubly novel in an era when quick and convenient were the rage, and vegetables were largely sourced from freezers and cans.

Since the 1970s, I've both expanded my repertoire and simplified my approach. My early recipes were packed with rich ingredients like butter, cheese, sour cream, eggs—in large part to appease those who might be worried that the lack of meat would leave everyone hungry. My confidence for lightening things up, acquired over a period of many years, was born out of a trust that people did not need bulk or richness to feel satisfied. Over time, my assurance also came from a better understanding of how to make food taste wonderful through seasoning, selective and various uses of heat, timing, attention to detail, and a stronger sense of aesthetic economy. A bonus of this approach is that, quite without conscious design, almost half of the dishes in this book are vegan.

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Now when I cook, I want as much space on the plate as possible for my beloved garden vegetables. For the most part, that is my definition of my cuisine: a beautiful plate of food, simply cooked,



maximally flavored, and embracing as many plant components as will harmoniously fit. My food is sharper, livelier, spicier, lighter, and more relaxed than it used to be.

These days, a favorite dinner feature at my house is a variety of vegetarian burgers: black bean burgers seasoned generously with cumin, for example, or patties made of sweet potatoes, chickpeas, quinoa, and spice, possibly topped with a dab of red pepper pesto or a spoonful of colorful slaw. Though you could never detect it, the burgers might well have come from the freezer, since most of them can be made in advance. Supper chez me might also be a pancake made from wild rice, mushrooms, and goat cheese, or it could just as easily be a celestial zucchini-ricotta cake.

A meal is equally likely to arrive at my table via the oven. In place of a heavy, cheesy casserole that my younger self might have prepared, I'm more likely to serve a puffy, crusty, and custardy popover full of mushrooms, or little quiche "muffins" filled with cauliflower, chopped tomatoes, and touches of feta cheese, or a hot, crisp pizza covered with abundant (and adjustable) vegetables. Vegetables are also the main event in an asparagus tart that takes about 15 minutes, thanks to a "cheat" ingredient: store-bought puff pastry.

Reversing the ratio of vegetables (and sometimes fruit) to carbohydrates (aka "starch") is one of my favorite techniques for delivering more garden items to the plate in delicious ways. This "great food flip" will have you gracing a modest serving of soba noodles with butternut squash; surrounding a simple risotto with a fig-, balsamic-, and lemon-laced stir-fry of leeks, escarole, and radicchio; and amping up a batch of black rice with beluga lentils and sautéed minced mushrooms that blend in visually while providing layers of contrasting taste. Finely chopped broccoli merges with millet in one recipe and dives headfirst into mashed potatoes in another; the former becomes a little pilaf that can be stuffed into a grilled portobello, and the latter transforms into main-course patties encrusted with walnuts and sautéed until golden. The next meal might be basmati rice cloaked in a savory blueberry sauce and spooned into a boat of roasted acorn squash.

Lasagna, of course, is generally pillowed with cheese, and the usual ways to veg it up tend to marinara-ize the sauce with zucchini or mushrooms or tuck spinach between the layers. My new approach, seasonal lasagna stacks, omits the tomato sauce and allows generous combinations of vegetables to house minimal noodles, with very light touches of cheese as a subtle presence. Vegan versions of these same lasagnas present the same ingredients in broth, with crumbled tofu replacing the cheese. The results are enthusiastically received every time.

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*For the most part, that is my definition of my cuisine: a beautiful plate of food, simply cooked, maximally flavored, and embracing as many plant components as will harmoniously fit.*

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The plant-food road to deliciousness allows you to be an artist as well as a cook, showcasing the beauty of the ingredients as you mix things up in creative yet taste-logical ways. Prepare for your kitchen spirit to be freed up as you embrace color contrasts in bean and rice combinations, pairing orange rice with black beans, yellow rice with red beans, and red rice with fresh green beans—all simple, all in this book. The bright gold of a sweet potato–pear soup begs to be punched up with a dash of a thick cranberry-orange vinaigrette, and a puddle of mango exults in deep magenta roasted beets and a crown of baby arugula. Bright green mashed peas can be topped with a tangle of fresh mint strips and served with Crayola-yellow crispy polenta triangles for dipping. The peas are part of an entire chapter devoted to the ultimate savory comfort food: mashed vegetables (why stop at mashed potatoes?), also featuring curried mashed carrots with cashews.

Creative cooking means allowing yourself to step out of the corral of definitions. Try setting aside assumptions about what breakfast, lunch, and dinner should be, and feel free to serve eggs fried in olive oil with a thin coating of fine, fresh bread crumbs for an elegant little dinner—plain or as a topping for smoky braised Brussels sprouts, fully deserving of a respectable red wine. Similarly a creamy Tuscan white bean soup can be dinner as well as lunch, especially when accompanied by a grilled bread and kale salad studded with red onions, walnuts, and sweet figs. A group of little dishes—your choice how many (piquillo peppers stuffed with goat cheese over salad; bulgur-walnut kibbeh balls on a circle of Greek yogurt; a slice of grilled Haloumi cheese piled on watermelon and doused with lime juice; small eggplant halves, slapped down in a hot pan and glazed with a sauce made from ginger, plum jam, and chilies) can also be dinner, and you have here more than 200 modular recipes to mix and match at your convenience.

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*Prepare for your kitchen spirit to be freed up as you embrace color contrasts.*

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Standard versions of mac and cheese can be heavy and uninteresting—even when they don't come from a box. I have upgraded the dish, taking it in several contrasting directions, combining it with chili for a deeply satisfying American hybrid, or with lemon, caramelized onions, and blue cheese in French-style rendition. And as for the signature quiche of my hippie days, I'm now more likely to make a fluffy, versatile, veg-centric frittata, which is essentially an easy quiche without the crust.

Main-event stews—simmered vegetable-legume combinations of various ethnic influences—are customized with a small, easy accessory to add intrigue. Peruvian stew, with potatoes, beans, tomatoes, and chilies, is accompanied by freshly cooked tiny quinoa-laced corn cakes; a simple lentil stew is taken to the next level with a topping of crunchy fried sage leaves and a hat of tender cottage cheese dumplings. A sunny root-vegetable stew surprises with the subtle presence of pears, entrancing even further with its sidekick of little buttermilk-rosemary-walnut biscuits. Curried yellow split pea

soup can be busied up with green peas and a big spoonful of basmati rice pilaf with nuts and raisins. .  
crown of ethereally thin and crispy fried onion rings lifts a red lentil or eggplant mash into the realm  
of craveable, using only the most basic pantry ingredients you already have on hand.

Multiple levels of flavor can come from innumerable sources. Almonds are ground and blended with garlic, olive oil, and sherry vinegar into a glorious faux aioli that you can use as you would mayonnaise—or cover with a blanket of grapes and serve as a first-course dip for crunchy cucumbers. Tofu and a thin omelet can be made over into noodle-impersonating toppings, and soaked chickpeas can be fried in olive oil, adding protein in light and playful ways.

Small bits of fruit and vegetables (blueberries with fresh, sweet corn; apples with olive oil and parsley; pink grapefruit with jicama, cilantro, and pumpkin seeds) are combined in beautiful little “saladitas,” a cross between a salad and a salsa, to make cheerful toppings or freestanding appetizers keeping things refreshing and compelling. “Optional Enhancements” at the end of each recipe allow you to take all of these in your own direction, varying the template each time you cook and keeping your cooking continuously new.

Once you try these recipes as written, fly away with them, if you wish, and make them your own. This is now your book, and soon these will become your recipes. I hope and trust the food you prepare will reward you and the people around you with all the inspiration, delight, and nourishment you deserve.

Smoky

- = caramelized
- = good-scorched
- = delicately glazed
- = unglazed, not yet cleaned pan
- = Heat itself
- = pan-contact-flavored (horizontal)
- = Dry-flavored
- = wet (steam/haze)-flavored
- = Texture as flavor
- = ambiguous temperature
- = inside-out flavor (evaporation)
- = brown edges
- = stick-in-pan -vs- keeping it moving in the pan

↳ the extra flavor that sometimes comes from letting it stick



WHAT PULLS US INTO THE KITCHEN?

MOTIVATION: craveability  
ACCESS  
STRATEGIES (including cleanup)

ATTITUDE  
VARIETY  
TIME MANAGEMENT (fitting it in)  
SPACE MANAGEMENT (also fitting it in)



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# Select Pantry Notes

*Throughout the book, I've kept the supplies and equipment straightforward, so most people in most places can cook most of the dishes with a basic setup. However, a few of my frequently used, choice ingredients (principally oils, vinegars, and sweeteners) may be less than familiar to some. Following those, I've listed the simple tools that I find essential and that I want to be sure you're working with to maximize your good times in the kitchen.*

## INGREDIENTS

### Workhorse Oils for Cooking

Olive oil is my baseline oil. You will notice that I designate “extra-virgin” in the uncooked uses and just indicate “olive oil” when I cook with it. This is to let you know that if you prefer to go to a lesser grade (often called “pure” in the United States) for cooking purposes, saving the more expensive stuff for salads and for finishing, that will work just fine. In my own home cooking, I use extra-virgin for everything; it's the only kind of olive oil I buy.

When I want a more neutral flavor or I want to cook at a higher temperature than olive oil will withstand, I use grapeseed oil, and sometimes peanut oil or coconut oil (which is solid at room temperature and usually comes in jars). These go well with Asian-themed dishes and are high-temperature sturdy and reliable. For very high-temperature frying, I like to use high-oleic (aka high-temperature) safflower oil.

**STORAGE:** Buy olive oil that is packed in dark bottles, to protect it from light. Assuming you'll be using it often, store it in a cool cupboard away from stove and sun, covered tightly. (You can also keep it in the refrigerator, but you will need to let it warm up a bit to soften before using.) Store the other workhorse oils in the refrigerator for maximum freshness—or at a cool, dark room temperature, if you use them often.

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*Creative cooking also means allowing yourself to step out of the corral of definitions.*

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## Flavor Oils for Finishing

High-quality extra-virgin olive oil and roasted nut and seed oils are shiny, extravagant condiments that will give your dish both a finished look and an extra layer of complex, exquisite flavor. They are delicate, and with the exception of the more robust toasted sesame oil (called Chinese sesame oil in this book) and roasted peanut oil, both of which you can cook with, they should be used as condiments only and not exposed to direct heat. These oils are a bit pricey, but they will last a long time, as a little bit goes far.

Truffle oil is in its own category. It is not seasoned with actual truffles but rather with a synthetic compound that mimics truffle flavor. Some chefs love it and others disapprove. I happen to like a touch of it here and there; you can be your own judge.

**STORAGE:** Keep all of these oils tightly covered and refrigerated.

## Vinegars

I have an entire cupboard devoted to vinegar, and it is always full. At any given time, there may be several white wine varieties (including sherry and champagne), several made from various kinds of red wine, apple cider vinegar, seasoned (with salt and sugar) rice vinegar, and supermarket-grade balsamic vinegar, a product that is not the true Italian delicacy, but rather an Americanized imitation and a pretty tasty one at that. Sometimes I will also use authentic, rich Italian balsamic from Modena—which comes packed in small bottles, with bona fide markers and stamps to prove its pedigree—as a finish. You can vary the vinegars you use in basic vinaigrettes and come up with your own signature flavor profile. You can also splash vinegar in or on any dish where you might normally add a squirt of fresh lemon juice for a pleasant acidic edge to punch up flatter, more staid, flavors, adding dimension and a sense of layering. It makes a difference to use these high-quality ingredients, and I find it well worth the extra cost. They will keep indefinitely, and I predict that you will use them sparingly and often.

## Sweeteners

Agave nectar, a plant derivative, is my go-to sweetener for recipes that need a touch of sweetness. Increasingly available in mainstream supermarkets, it is relatively inexpensive, keeps indefinitely, and contributes a concentrated, neutral sweetness that blends easily and well with other flavors. Similar to honey or maple syrup, agave falls somewhere between the two in thickness but has less of a flavor presence than either. Sometimes, when I want more flavor, I use pure maple syrup or a light-

colored honey. (The taste intensity of honey is indicated by its hue.) Agave, honey, and maple syrup have similar degrees of sweetness, so from that angle, they are interchangeable. Granulated and brown sugars are about a third less sweet. I use these in most baked goods, and if I want a drier effect in a savory dish.

Pomegranate molasses (deeply reduced pure pomegranate juice) is one of my favorite flavor boosters. Even though it falls in the sweetener category, it is actually quite tart, and it lends layers of complexity and mystery to everything it touches. It's even good straight from the bottle as a finishing touch. A wonderful discovery awaits you here, if you haven't already stumbled upon it. Look for pomegranate molasses in Middle Eastern-themed supermarkets, specialty shops, or on the Internet.

## TOOLS

If you are armed with good tools that you keep in good condition, and if your kitchen is clear-counter ready, you will want to cook more because you will love it more.

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*There is no one right chef's knife for everyone, but there is a right one for you.*

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## The Knife

This is the most important tool. There is no one right chef's knife for everyone, but there is a right one for you. You just need to find it. How will you know? It will feel good in your hand—the right grip, weight, shape, spirit. It should have a straight blade (serrated is for bread and sectioning citrus, and that's about it) and be so sharp that when you strike a sitting apple, it will grab immediately. When you slice further, you will get crisply defined slices, not shreds and not mush. You might even hear a sound effect, akin to a “whoosh.” That will feel as fantastic as the thing you just sliced looks, and when this happens, you will know that this is *your knife*. Keep it sharp by conditioning it on a steel, ideally before each use. I also have mine professionally sharpened annually.

I have a cleaver, too, which I use for attacking the heavier items, most notably winter squash. I also have a couple of strong paring knives (it's just as important to keep these razor sharp as the large blades) that I use constantly for smaller things such as fruit and vegetable snacks.



## Cutting Boards

I recommend that you keep one exclusively for onions, garlic, and shallots. Have another for anything else and everything else. Both wood and synthetic are fine; it's up to you.

## Food Processor

I admit to an unabashed dependency on my food processor, both the larger edition and the mini-bowl attachment for smaller batches. The regular steel blade is the heavy lifter, but I also use the grating attachment fairly often. I hope you have one; in addition to a sharp knife, it will make short work of many of these recipes.

## Immersion Blender

This works so well that I don't think I've used my stand blender in years. Immersion blenders are inexpensive, easy to store, and supereffective. They also minimize work and cleanup, since you end up using far fewer pots and bowls. They also clean easily—just be sure you power it off (and unplug, if that applies) before cleaning, for safety. Immersion blenders have razor-sharp blades and can be dangerous if used carelessly.

## Large (10- to 12-inch) Skillet

This is by far the hardest-working of all my pots and pans. In fact, I leave it out on the stove almost all the time, since I use it so much. Even if this pan seems large for some dishes, I use it anyway to give enhanced horizontal opportunity to whatever I'm cooking. Contact with the surface of the hot pan is valuable seasoning, and maximum space makes this possible.



## Tongs

One-handed, spring-loaded, to be exact. These are my go-to grabbers bar none; they might as well be extensions of my hands.

## Scissors

I snip a lot—everything from artichokes to fresh herbs to winter squash seeds to pizza dough. My scissors aren't fancy or special, just strong, clean, and sharp. (Also bright red-handled, so I can find them easily if I leave them where they don't belong.)

## Sturdy Peeler

A good, strong vegetable peeler, whether Y-shaped or straight across, is good for so much more than removing the peel from vegetables. I use mine for stripping hard cheese, thick-zesting citrus, fashioning vegetable “ribbons” for delicate salads, and shaving chocolate for dessert toppings.

## Mandoline

I love my inexpensive little blade board on which I can swiftly render an onion or fennel bulb into a flurry of diaphanous wings. Once you experience the lightness (in every sense) of wafer-thin slices of a radish or beet or carrot, you will look for every excuse to do it over and over. (See [Crudité “Chips.”](#)) Just be careful to pay complete attention when strumming on this utensil—it is very sharp, and the process goes fast, so keep your eye on your vulnerable hand.

## Rasp and Zester

For finely grated citrus zest, use a rasp. For long strands, a few strokes of an old-fashioned zester will provide.

## Other Important Items

Soup pot  
Medium saucepan with a lid  
Spoons of all kinds (but mostly wooden ones of all sizes)  
Liquid measuring cups with spouts  
Spatulas (rubber ones and small, sturdy metal ones)  
Whisks  
Colanders of various sizes  
Kitchen towels (a large supply, clean and plush)  
Oven thermometer  
Heat diffuser  
Toaster oven



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# Vegetarian and Vegan Menus

*A vegetarian dinner can be as straightforward as a favorite soup, or a mac and cheese, or a risotto, or a “supper from the oven,” served with a green salad dressed with your favorite vinaigrette. It can also be a stew and a matching accessory, preceded by a small salad appetizer.*

*Permission is granted to enjoy a plate of eggs or an omelet in tandem with a cooked vegetable, some toast, and a glass of wine. There will certainly be nights when this is all you have time for, and it’s also all you need.*

At other times, you can have fun assembling modular arrangements of say, roasted vegetables on top of mashed vegetables, topped with a saladita (a cross between a small salad and a salsa). Or you may decide to pair a cooked grain with a marinated vegetable salad, playing with complementary temperatures and textures. A sampling of smaller dishes on a larger plate can add up to a compelling meal, and to this end, I’ve come up with recipes that do just fine when made in advance and reheated. Flexibility (both the food’s and your own) opens doors to new combinations that can expand the scope of your home-food culture. Throughout the book, I’ve suggested matchmaking among the dishes, hoping that you personalize combinations according to your taste and the preferences of those for whom you cook.

The following 35 menus reflect how I might cluster recipes at my table. You can follow them exactly or consider them templates. Feel free to swap in your own creations and traditional dishes (desserts included), and enjoy a fresh context for some old family favorites.



# VEGETARIAN MENUS

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1.

Creamy Tuscan-Style White Bean Soup  
Linguine with Roasted Red Pepper Pesto  
Kale Caesar  
Buttermilk-Yogurt-Maple Sherbet

2.

Grilled Haloumi Cheese on watermelon slices  
Mushroom Popover Pie  
Mashed Broccoli  
Fruit-Studded Madeleine Cake

3.

Mashed Parsnips or Mashed Celery Root,  
topped with Browned Potatoes and Onion  
Maple-Mustard Glaze  
Cheese-Crusted Roasted Cauliflower  
Radicchio Salad with Oranges and Pistachios



4.

Caramelized Onion Frittata with Artichoke Hearts, Zucchini, and Goat Cheese  
Grilled Bread and Kale Salad with Red Onions, Walnuts, and Figs  
Brown Sugar-Roasted Rhubarb with Cinnamon-Toast Crumbs

5.

Brussels Sprout Gratin with Potatoes and Spinach  
Apple-Parsley Saladita  
Brûléed Persimmon Pudding

## 6.

Golden Mango–Nectarine Gazpacho

Asparagus Puff Pastry Tart

Summer Corn and Barley Salad

Bittersweet Mocha Bundt Cake

## 7.

Mac, Chili, and Cheese

Fried Green Tomato “Burgers”

Green salad with avocado, jicama, and Jalapeño-Cilantro-Lime Vinaigrette

Grapefruit-Lime Curd, in a crust or with cookies

## 8.

Romesco Sauce, puddled on the plate

Cubes of roasted butternut squash on the sauce

Sautéed assorted mushrooms, scattered

Flash-Fried Kale with Garlic, Almonds, and Cheese

A spoonful of fresh ricotta and a fried egg

Cranapple Walnut Cake

## 9.

Tortilla Soup

Salad Greens with Goat Cheese–Stuffed Piquillo Peppers

Chili Pepitas

Mushroom Gravy for Everyone, puddled on the plate

Chard- or Collard-Wrapped Polenta-Chili Tamale Packages on the sauce

## 10.

Crispy-Coated Eggplant Parmesan “Burgers”

Roasted Garlic–Mashed Cauliflower

Green Beans and Beets with Pickled Red Onions

Couscous with Dates, Pistachios, Pine Nuts, and Parsley

## 11.

Lablabi (Tunisian Chickpea Soup)

Bulgur-Walnut Kibbeh Balls on a bed of yogurt, topped with pomegranate seeds

Crunchy Cucumbers and Red Onion with Fresh Cheese

Pear Tart with Olive Oil–Cornmeal–Pine Nut Crust

## 12.

Very Simple Lentil Stew

Cottage Cheese Dumplings

Quinoa-Couscous Pilaf with Carrot, Roasted Almond Oil, and Pickled Red Onions

Green salad with Sherry-Honey-Tarragon-Mustard Vinaigrette

Pecan Shortbread Cookies

## 13.

Soft Polenta topped with a poached egg

Mixed Mushroom Ragout

Shaved Fennel with Apple, Blue Cheese Crumbs, Walnuts, and Radicchio (see Variation 4)

## 14.

Ruby Gazpacho

Mini Cauliflower Quiches

Green Rice

Chocolate Cream Pie

## 15.

Nectarine-Thyme Saladita

Fresh Corn Soup

Toast duet: one slice topped with Avocado “Mayo,”  
the other with ricotta, store-bought or Homemade

## 16.

Spinach-Basmati Soup with Yogurt

**SALAD TRIO:**

Cauliflower Salad with Salsa Verde

Grated Carrot Salad

Celery-Almond-Date Saladita

Olive Oil Toasts



17.

Cumin-Scented Black Bean Burgers

Chili-Cilantro Mayonnaise

Strawberry-Avocado Saladita or Jicama–Pink Grapefruit Saladita

Your own favorite slaw

Warmed corn tortillas

18.

Wild Rice Pancakes with Mushrooms and Goat Cheese

Avocado “Mayo” or guacamole

Fire-Roasted Bell Pepper Saladita or salsa

Chili-Sesame Green Beans

19.

Fully Loaded Buttermilk Corn Cakes

Chipotle Cream

Avocado-Grapefruit-Mango Saladita

Green salad with Jalapeño-Cilantro-Lime Vinaigrette

Chili Pepitas

20.

Spring Farro

Asparagus Salad with Roasted Red Peppers and Chickpeas

Homemade Ricotta with artisan honey and fresh fruit in season





## VEGAN MENUS

1.

Mushroom Wonton Soup

Coconut-Mango Rice Noodle Salad

Eggplant Slap-Down with Ginger-Plum Sauce

2.

Yellow Split Pea Dal, with spinach added

Spiced Basmati Pilaf with Nuts and Raisins, made without butter

Onion Pakoras dipped in Pomegranate-Lime Glaze

Pomegranate-Mint Saladita

3.

Curried Mashed Carrots and Cashews, made without honey

Forbidden Rice with Beluga Lentils and Mushrooms

Mashed White Beans, left whole

Pan-Grilled Mushroom Slices

Sliced cherry tomatoes

4.

Humble Potato-Leek Soup

Cranberry Rice

Green Beans, Edamame, and Peas, made without butter

Mashed sweet potatoes or winter squash

Wilted Spinach Salad with Crispy Smoked Tofu, Grilled Onion, Croutons, and Tomatoes



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