



A VEGETABLE HOLIDAY FEAST

LUKAS VOLGER

Books by Lukas Volger

Veggie Burgers Every Which Way
Vegetarian Entrées that Won't Leave You Hungry

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WHEN FOOD IS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE GATHERING—whether in the form of an annual holiday meal, a small dinner party, or an impromptu supper with a friend who's passing through the neighborhood—I'm happy to assume whatever role is assigned. I like being a host, I like being a guest, I like stepping into the kitchen to help when that's needed, and I like stepping out of the way when that's what's needed.

My favorite Thanksgivings are the ones where everyone has felt represented by what's on the table. When I was in college and had just moved to New York, my roommate Dave and I filled our apartment with New England-area friends and friends-of-friends and had a feast, which most of us ate cross-legged on the hardwood floor. I made vegetarian lasagna, a giant focaccia, and chocolate mousse cake for dessert. Dave roasted a turkey, made oyster stuffing, and pumpkin pie. Participating in someone else's food traditions, at worst, can be an enlightening experience, and at best, creates game-changing memories and is a thrilling way to enrich or establish lifelong bonds. In this case our unorthodox spread made for something fun and memorable, emblematic of where we—both twenty years old—had come from, and the adults we were evolving into.

In my family we usually stick to a roster of favorite, traditional recipes, like candied sweet potatoes, turkey, stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes, and cranberry jelly. Some of this is changing as my family grows, but the ritual is still familiar enough that I can usually gauge what time it is by the aromas wafting out of the

kitchen. Last year I spent the holiday with my friend Kathryn's family, and there the spread looked fresh out of *Bon Appetit*. Everything glistened and complimented, it had all the right table settings, and it was perfectly executed. I love all these meals. I'll eat whatever I'm served, simply because I'm flattered that someone has gone to the trouble of cooking it and is willing to share. This surprises people who expect me to be a strict vegetarian, but I find it a good way to delineate my eating habits: With rare exception, I cook vegetarian for myself, but if I'm a guest, I can be a grateful, omnivorous one.

The recipes collected here are the result of a longstanding desire to prepare a full holiday meal *my* way. I've never had such an opportunity—after all, these big, community meals should be something of a collaborative effort—but I've found a good compromise. For a few years now I've hosted or partaken in an extra, mock Thanksgiving—what we call a “friendsgiving”—by scheduling a big holiday meal for friends a few days or weeks before or after the actual Thanksgiving. This is a tradition that's happily stuck. It gives my friends and I, who are usually scattered around the country during the holidays, a chance to convene and, in a food-oriented way, give thanks for one another.

As much as I like a tried-and-true, generations-bequeathed celebration dish, I almost always want to try something new. You can't make new traditions by sticking only to the old things, and plus, experiments are fun. I wanted this meal to embody the spirit of a Thanksgiving or Christmas spread and I wanted to put seasonal vegetables in the forefront. I wanted everything to be decadent but not excessive, to feel inventive but logical. And I wanted to make a vegetarian meal that didn't rotate around any kind of meatless roast. A couple dishes in this menu could vie for

the center-of-the-plate spot—the galette, or squash and chard patties, or quinoa gratin—but for the most part, everything has equal billing. I don't expect you to make this menu verbatim, but I hope that one or two items find their way to your table and that they don't clash with your own selection of holiday fare.

Where possible, I've offered vegan and gluten-free alternatives. I've gone to some trouble to create dishes that lend themselves to advance preparation. I've singled out components that can be prepped ahead of time and dishes that can be assembled a day or two in advance. That said, I don't think Thanksgiving—or any other holiday that celebrates food—is the time to take shortcuts, and these aren't recipes that necessarily fall into a “30 minutes or less” category. That's great for weeknights, but for a big holiday feast, indulge yourself a little. Opt for full-fat. Sharpen your knives. Don't sweat the extra dirty dishes.

And relax. Stress finds its way into the food, so avoid that by pouring yourself a drink—it doesn't really matter what time of day it is—taking a deep breath, and enjoying yourself. Most of all, ask for help. This is when you've got some extra bodies you can assign to last-minute grocery store trips, peeling the potatoes, plucking fresh herbs, whisking the gravy, uncorking the wine, etc. If there's one important piece of advice I have, it's to have everybody help wash the dishes as you go. Anyone who declares, “That one's a soaker!” as he or she abandons a crusted-over roasting pan in the sink and wanders off to the family room with a refilled drink in hand, should not be trusted.

Enjoy the food memories you're creating and sharing.
Happy holidays.

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Bourbon Pecans

These are a holiday tradition in Walker family, where I spent Thanksgiving last year. They're mildly spicy, boozy, and really addictive, and since then I've made them for all types of gatherings. They're also a great addition to gift baskets. I've tweaked the original recipe to make them less savory, so that they work in the dessert (p. 22)—set aside a 1/2 cup of them if you plan to go that route.

1 pound raw pecans
1/3 cup bourbon
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon bitters
1 tablespoon neutral oil
1-1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon allspice
Pinch cloves
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon cayenne

Preheat the oven to 325° F.

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the pecans. When the water returns to a boil, blanch for 1 minute. Drain.

Meanwhile, simmer the bourbon in a small saucepan over medium-high heat and continue cooking until it reduces by half. Remove from the heat. This will take about 5 minutes. Combine the reduced bourbon with the sugar, bitters, oil, cinnamon, allspice, and cloves in a mixing bowl. Stir in the hot, drained pecans. Let stand for 15 minutes, stirring periodically.

Spread the pecans on a baking sheet and bake, stirring every 10 minutes, for 30 to 40 minutes, until pecans are crisp and the glaze has hardened. Cool and store in an airtight container.

YIELD: 1 pound, about 2 cups

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up to 4 days ahead

Tangy Roasted Parsnip Dip

This versatile, baba ganoush-like dip will have its skeptics, but give it a chance. Roasting parsnips mellows their sweet, pungent flavor, and yogurt enriches and adds tang to their earthiness. At the cafe/bar where I work, we served it recently as the headlining ingredient on a crostini, drizzled with maple syrup. As an appetizer, serve it with crackers, crudites, or pita chips, and use the leftovers as a spread on sandwiches. Opt for smaller, younger parsnips, and make sure they're fully roasted and limp-tender—you don't want to find any woody chunks of core that the food processor can't break hidden in your dip. And here, a runnier, perhaps homemade, yogurt is more optimal than a thick, Greek-style one.

1 pound small- and medium-sized parsnips, scrubbed and tops trimmed off
1/4 cup dry white wine
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons butter, cut into small pieces
Kosher salt
Pepper
1/2 cup plain yogurt
Zest of 1 lemon
2 to 3 tablespoons good-quality maple syrup or olive oil, for serving

Preheat the oven to 425° F.

Cut the parsnips into uniform matchsticks, about 1/2-inch thick by 3-inches long. Spread them out in a roasting pan or baking sheet. Pour in the wine and water, scatter the butter over the surface, then sprinkle with several pinches of salt and grinds of black pepper. Wrap the pan tightly with aluminum foil and roast for about 25 minutes, gently shaking it periodically. When the parsnips are limp and completely tender, remove the foil and continue cooking for another 5 minutes, until any liquid left in the pan reduces slightly and the parsnips begin to caramelize. Cool.

Combine the parsnips, any liquids in the pan, and the yogurt in a food

processor. Puree until smooth, scraping down as needed, and making sure that there aren't stray vegetable chunks hidden in there. If you're having trouble getting the mixture moving, add a few tablespoons of milk. Stir in the lemon zest and add pinches of salt and pepper as needed.

To serve, scoop the mixture to a serving dish, make a few divots on the surface with a spoon, and drizzle with 2 to 3 tablespoons of the maple syrup or olive oil.

YIELD: About 2 cups, to serve 6 to 8

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up to 2 or 3 days ahead

TO MAKE VEGAN: The yogurt can be omitted for a more straightforward vegetable puree, and olive oil substituted for the butter. Add a bit of vegetable stock or nondairy milk to get the mixture moving in the food processor.

Squash and Chard Patties

These cakes aren't quite crispy enough to call fritters or latkes, and not spongy enough to call pancakes. A less precise veggie burger enthusiast might just call them veggie burgers. They're dense with vegetables but have a decadent feel, due in part to the frying, and I especially like the non-traditional spices—cumin, chilies—in the context of traditional Thanksgiving fare. Frying the patties is a great task for whomever happens to be standing idly by.

1 medium spaghetti squash
2 tablespoons neutral oil, plus
additional for frying
1-1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 medium onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 serrano chilies, seeded and
minced
4 cups finely shredded Swiss
chard, from about 1/2 bunch
1 teaspoon brown sugar
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
Pepper
2 eggs, beaten
1/4 cup coarse breadcrumbs,
preferably homemade, or
panko
2 tablespoons flour
Feta-Yogurt topping (recipe
follows)

Roast the squash: Preheat the oven to 425° F. Carefully prick the squash all over with a sharp paring knife. Place the squash on a baking sheet or an oven-safe skillet and roast, rolling it over every 20 minutes, until you can insert a sharp knife into the flesh and meet no resistance, about 1 hour. Allow to cool for at least 30 minutes.

Slice the squash in half lengthwise. Use a fork to remove the seeds, then untangle the flesh, churning it pasta-style with the fork so that it comes out in strands. Place in a mixing bowl.

Heat the oil a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the cumin seeds, stir for about 30 seconds until fragrant, then add the onion. Cook, stirring periodically, until the onions brown and even get crispy in parts, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the garlic and chilies,

stir for a minute, then add the chard. Cook until the chard is tender and any liquid in the pan has evaporated, which will take about 5 minutes.

Add the greens mixture to the squash, using a fork to make sure they're well combined. Add the brown sugar, salt, and several grinds of black pepper. Adjust seasonings if necessary. Fold in the eggs, followed by the flour and breadcrumbs. Let stand for at least 15 minutes, or up to 3 hours.

Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a wide skillet over medium-high heat. Test the temperature of the oil by dropping in a small portion of batter. It should sizzle immediately and actively, but not violently—if there's no sizzle, give the pan heat a few more minutes to heat; if it's too hot, remove the pan from the heat for a minute and turn down the flame. Fry heaping tablespoons of batter in the oil, 3 or 4 at a time to avoid crowding, until browned and crisp on each side, about 4 minutes per side. Between batches, wipe out charred bits and add additional oil to the pan as needed. (Arrange the cooked patties on a baking sheet and keep them warm in a 275° F preheated oven if you'd like.)

Serve warm, with the Feta-Yogurt topping.

YIELD: About 2 dozen 3-inch patties, to serve 6 to 8

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: The squash can be roasted 1 day ahead; batter can be made a few hours ahead.

TO MAKE VEGAN: Flax “eggs” (1 tablespoon ground flax seeds whisked with 3 tablespoons water, per egg) work pretty well here. Either skip the feta-yogurt topping completely, or substitute a coriander chutney or a quick fresh herb salad: toss a handful of roughly torn herbs like basil, cilantro, mint, or parsley with a squeeze of lime juice and a pinch of salt.

Feta-Yogurt Topping

1/2 cup crumbled feta
3/4 cup plain yogurt
2 tablespoons roughly chopped
parsley
1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Place the feta in a mixing bowl and mash it with a fork until it resembles a paste. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Adjust seasonings as needed.

YIELD: 1-1/4 cups, enough for 1 batch of patties

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up to 2 days ahead; stir before serving.

Brussels Sprouts and Roasted Chestnut Galette

This festive, vegetarian centerpiece dish fits right into the Thanksgiving landscape. It's got the seasonal vegetables, late autumn colors, a familiar flavor profile—and it's rich and decadent, a perfect foil for all the traditional adornments like cranberry relish and gravy. Steps can be broken up—the crust and the filling can be made separately, and both ahead of time—and you can even assemble the galette a few hours in advance. Look for roasted chestnuts that are sold in jars or vacuum sealed pouches.

Pastry

- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup whole-wheat, spelt, or rye flour
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 12 tablespoons cold butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 4 to 6 tablespoons ice water

Filling

- 5 cups Brussels sprouts, trimmed and cleaned
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, cut into 1/4-inch-thick strips
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thinly
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup roughly chopped roasted chestnuts
- 1/2 cup crème fraîche
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon melted butter

To make the pastry, combine the flours and salt in a food processor and pulse to combine. Add half the butter and pulse a few times until well combined, then add the remaining butter. Continue pulsing until there are pea-sized bits throughout. Add 3 tablespoons water, pulse a few times to combine. Add more water by the tablespoon, pulsing as needed, until the dough is uniformly moist and just begins to look like it wants to cohere. Grab a small amount with your hand: if it holds its shape easily and doesn't crumble, you're set. If not, pulse in a bit more water.

Spread out a sheet of plastic wrap on a work surface and dump the dough onto it. Gather up the corners of the wrap and gently nudge the dough into the center, then shape it into a disc. Wrap tightly and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes and up to 1 day.

To prepare the filling, slice the sprouts thinly by passing them through the slicer disc of the food processor.

Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a wide skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are tender and begin to caramelize—15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the garlic, the sprouts, and the salt. Cook without disrupting in increments of 3 or 4 minutes—the goal is that some of sprouts develop brown spots and begin to char—for 10 to 15 minutes, until the sprouts are tender. Remove from the heat. Stir in the chestnuts, crème fraîche, mustard, and pepper. Taste for seasoning. Allow to cool.

Preheat the oven to 400° F.

Unwrap the dough, dust it lightly with all-purpose flour, and place it between two sheets of parchment paper. Roll it out, starting from the center of the disc and rotating it 90 degrees after each roll, to a thickness of about 1/8-inch and a diameter of about 15 inches. Remove the top piece of parchment (wipe it off, save it, and reuse it for something else), then slide the crust and the parchment it's attached to onto an unrimmed or overturned baking sheet. Pile the filling in the center, leaving a 2- to 3-inch perimeter. Gently flatten the filling to an even thickness, then fold the crust around the filling, pleating it as needed. If the dough sticks to the parchment, use a dough scraper or chef's knife that's been lightly dusted with flour to slip underneath it. Store in the refrigerator until ready to bake, for up to 4 hours.

Just before baking, brush the crust with the melted butter, then bake for 25 to 35 minutes, until the crust is golden brown. Serve warm.

YIELD: 1 galette, to serve 6 to 8

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: The galette can assembled up to 4 hours in advance. The crust and filling can each be made up to 1 day in advance.

Quinoa and Celery Root Gratin

It might look like an unassuming casserole side dish, but this is actually hearty enough to qualify as a main. Again, there are a few steps here, there'll be some dishes to wash, but nothing is very complicated. If you aren't crazy about celery root—though I do recommend giving it a shot; I love its clean flavor—substitute your favorite winter squash. Deborah Madison's Rice and Winter Squash Gratin, from Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone, is the inspiration.

1 cup quinoa, rinsed and drained
2 cups water
4 tablespoons butter or olive oil, plus additional for greasing
1-1/2 medium onions, diced
3 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons flour
1-1/2 cups hot milk
Zest of 1 lemon
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
3 stalks celery, diced
1 medium celery root, peeled and grated
1/4 cup roughly chopped parsley or celery leaves
1 tablespoon roughly chopped oregano, marjoram, or savoy
1/2 cup grated gruyere or emmentaler (optional)
Pepper

Preheat the oven to 375 °F. Lightly grease a 2-quart capacity baking dish.

Combine the quinoa with the water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat, cover, and cook for 15 minutes. Set aside, uncovered, as you prepare the rest of the recipe.

Melt 3 tablespoons butter or olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add a third of the onions and cook until translucent, 5 to 7 minutes. (Meanwhile, heat up the milk in the microwave.) Stir in 1 minced clove of the garlic, then add the flour. Stir constantly for about 2 minutes, until the mixture darkens a shade and smells nutty. Whisk in the milk. Stir constantly and cook until the mixture thickens to the consistency of glue, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the lemon zest, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of butter or olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the remaining onion, the celery, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook until tender and translucent, 6 to 8 minutes, then stir in the celery root. Cook, partially covered, for about 10 minutes, stirring periodically, until the celery root is tender. Add a splash of water to the pan if it appears dry.

Combine the quinoa, celery mixture, and herbs in a mixing bowl, then stir in the béchamel and cheese, if using. Adjust seasonings. Scoop the mixture into the prepared dish and smooth the surface with a spatula. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until the surface is golden brown and a crust begins to develop.

YIELD: 6 servings

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: The gratin can be made, cooled, and stored in the refrigerator, unbaked and sealed with plastic wrap, for up to 2 days in advance. Bring to room temperature before baking.

TO MAKE VEGAN: This gratin can easily be made with your favorite nondairy milk. Almond milk works well for bechamels. Omit the cheese.

TO MAKE GLUTEN-FREE: Omit the flour in the flour in the béchamel sauce. Instead saute the onions and celery, then garlic, in the butter. Pour in the milk and bring to a simmer. Whisk together 2-1/2 teaspoons cornstarch or sweet rice flour with 1 tablespoon milk or water until dissolved. Whisk this into the hot mixture and continue to simmer until thickened. If necessary, add additional slurry, 1 teaspoon starch to 2 teaspoons water, at a time.

Kale and Caramelized Onion Focaccia

I like a plump, fluffy focaccia, and that's what this is. Too many I've made are too thin—it ends up as flatbread, which has its merits but is never what I have in mind when I set out to make focaccia. This recipe has a more developed flavor from the whole-wheat flour and a long rise overnight, and the kale and caramelized onion topping allow it to be a colorful vehicle for vegetables. But feel free to nix the toppings; instead, drizzle the dough liberally with olive oil and sprinkle with flaky salt and big pinches of your favorite dried herbs or a blend, like herbes de provence, just before putting it in the oven.

Focaccia

- 1/4 cup warm water
- 1 packet yeast
- Pinch sugar
- 1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour, plus additional for kneading
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup room-temperature water
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus additional for greasing and drizzling
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Toppings:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions, cut into 1/4-inch-thick strips
- 4 cups finely chopped kale, from about 1/2 bunch
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt
- Flaky finishing salt

In a large mixing bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the warm water, yeast, sugar, 1/4 cup all-purpose flour, and 1/4 cup whole-wheat flour. Stir until smooth, then let stand for 30 minutes, until the surface is dotted with air bubbles.

Add the room-temperature water, remaining flour, olive oil, and salt.

If making by hand, stir until smooth, then transfer the mixture to a floured working surface and knead until smooth and elastic, adding additional all-purpose flour, up to 2/3 cup, as needed to keep the dough from sticking too much. This will take 8 to 10 minutes. Add flour reluctantly, especially towards the end—the wetter the dough, the better the bread. Some sticking to the surface is fine,

and it's helpful to use a dough scraper to get underneath it. Transfer the dough to a mixing bowl and coat it all over with olive oil.

If using a stand mixer, stir the dough with the paddle attachment until smooth, then switch to the dough hook. Stir with the motor on medium-low speed and add additional flour as needed, up to 2/3 cup, until the dough is smooth and elastic. This will take about 5 minutes. The dough will stick to the bottom of the bowl in a big mass, but should easily pull away from the sides. Scrape onto a work surface and shape it into a round. Return the dough to the bowl and coat it all over with olive.

Cover with a towel and let rise until doubled in size, about 2 hours, or (preferably) overnight in the refrigerator. If you let the dough rise in the refrigerator, allow the dough to warm up by setting it at room temperature for 1 hour before proceeding.

Liberally grease two 9-inch round cake pans with olive oil.

Scrape the dough onto a work surface and divide into 2 pieces. Stretch each one into a rough round, then press them into the prepared pans. Poke with your index finger so that they're covered with dimples. Cover with a towel and let rise until doubled in size again, about 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 450° F.

Prepare the topping: Heat remaining olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions and caramelize them: Spread into a single layer and cook without disturbing for 5 minutes. Stir the onions, then cook them again without disturbing for 5 minutes. Repeat until the onions are golden and caramelized, which will take 20-25 minutes. Add the kale, red pepper flakes, and a few pinches of salt, and cook until the kale is wilted. Let cool slightly.

Divide the kale mixture over the risen breads, then drizzle with olive oil, making sure to cover the edges. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, until golden brown. Cool before slicing.

YIELD: Two 9-inch round focaccias, to serve 10 to 12

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Focaccia is best served on the day it's made. Plan to bake it a few hours prior to eating.

Simple Salad with Clementine Vinaigrette

A simple salad is desperately needed in a holiday spread—a little bit of bitterness and fresh crunch go a long way to offering relief from the rest of the rich dishes. This mellow one has a vinaigrette that's only modestly acidic and ingredients that are minimally fussed with: toasted pine nuts, salted fennel, barely bitter endive, and tender greens.

- 1/3 cup pine nuts
- 1 fennel bulb, trimmed and sliced thinly
- 6 cups arugula, mixed greens, or other tender baby lettuce
- 1 head endive, halved and sliced thinly
- 1 recipe Clementine Vinaigrette (recipe below)

Put the pine nuts in a small skillet then place over medium-low heat. Toast until fragrant and golden-brown, swirling the pan frequently—this will take about 5 to 7 minutes. Their flavor is best if you toast them within an hour or two of serving.

Toss the fennel and a few pinches of salt in a serving bowl. Let stand for 10 minutes, until softened slightly. If liquid collects in the bottom of the bowl, carefully pour it out or blot it with a clean towel or paper towel.

Add the greens, endive, and pine nuts, then, just before serving, toss with the vinaigrette—start with 1/4 cup, and add as more as needed. Serve immediately, passing the pepper grinder at the table.

YIELD: 6 to 8 servings

Clementine Vinaigrette

5 tablespoons fresh Clementine
juice, from about 3
Clementines
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
5 tablespoons olive oil

Combine all ingredients in a jar,
cover with a tight-fitting lid, and
shake until emulsified. Taste and add
more salt if needed.

YIELD: About 2/3 cup, enough for one
salad, plus extra

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up
to 3 days in advance

Hand-Mashed Yukon Golds

Mashed potatoes are something of a contentious issue in my family. When I moved to New York and started working in a restaurant kitchen, one of the first things I learned is to never use a food processor or electric beaters on potatoes: it breaks down the starches and makes the potatoes gluey. Try telling that to my Grandpa, who since I can remember has always made them with the hand-held electric mixer set to high speed. He was amused the one Thanksgiving when I'd packed my potato ricer with my luggage. I don't recall his mashed potatoes ever being gluey, but I've still come to prefer them this way, mashed and whipped by hand. The texture is more interesting and the flavor rings clearer of potatoes. I also prefer using Yukon golds, which have creamier, less starchy flesh than Russets.

2 pounds Yukon gold potatoes
1-1/4 teaspoons kosher salt
2/3 cup whole milk
4 tablespoons butter
Pepper (optional)

Peel the potatoes and cut them into 1-inch cubes, transferring them to a large pot of cold water as you go so that they don't brown.

Place the pot over high heat and bring to a boil. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover partially, reduce the heat, and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, until completely tender. Drain, then return the potatoes to the hot pot and shake it for a few seconds over the burner so as to cook off any remaining water. Remove from the heat.

Combine the milk and butter in a small saucepan over low heat, until heated through and the butter is melted. Alternatively, combine in a

microwave-safe container and heat it in 30-second increments on medium heat in the microwave.

Use a potato masher to mash the potatoes. There will be some lumps—I like it this way. If you prefer a perfectly smooth consistency, pass the cooked potatoes through a potato ricer or food mill, then return them to the pot.

Add the milk-butter mixture to the hot potatoes and use a rubber spatula to incorporate. Add remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper. Switch to a whisk and whip steadily for a few moments to achieve a fluffy texture.

YIELD: 5 to 6 servings

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: The potatoes can be peeled, cubed, and stored in cold water a few hours in advance. It's best to cook, mash, and whip them as close as possible to serving.

TO MAKE VEGAN: Use your favorite nondairy milk and substitute olive oil for the butter.

Apple and Cranberry Relish

I'm glad that cranberry relish has a place at the holiday table, even if I'm not entirely sure why (I especially don't get why the canned variety is so popular). A sweet, tart garnish on the plate is a terrific thing for contrast and color, especially in the context of a heavy meal. Here, dried cranberries are plumped in red wine vinegar, giving the relish an unexpected zing, and the horseradish lends a touch of sinus-clearing heat.

1 cup dried cranberries
1/3 cup red wine vinegar
2 tart apples, peeled and cored
1/4 cup sugar
1 tablespoon prepared or
freshly grated horseradish

Combine the cranberries and the vinegar in a saucepan. Add just enough hot tap water to so that the berries are submerged, then put over medium-high heat, stirring just until the mixture begins to boil. Remove from the heat and let stand for 15 to 20 minutes, until plump. Let cool to room temperature.

Strain the cranberries then finely dice them. Finely dice the apples. Alternatively, pass the berries and apple through a meat grinder or the grinder attachment of a stand mixer.

Combine with the sugar and horseradish. Taste, and add more sugar or horseradish as needed. Let stand for about a half hour, until the sugar dissolves, then refrigerate, covered, until ready to serve.

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up to 1 day in advance.

YIELD: About 2 cups, to serve 6 to 8

Shallot Gravy

I first made this gravy last year for my Holiday Veggie Burger Loaf, and it was a happy revelation—it's so easy! Now, there's never a reason not to have gravy. I like it the way most people do, on mashed potatoes and stuffing, with a dab of cranberry relish accidentally swirled in, but it also goes well with the Brussels sprouts galette (p. 11). This can be made in advance and reheated, though it does thicken as it cools. Definitely save some for Thanksgiving leftovers sandwiches.

2 tablespoons olive oil or butter
3 shallots, sliced into thin rings
1-1/2 tablespoons flour
1-1/2 cups hot vegetable stock
3 tablespoons dry white wine
1/4 teaspoon dried or 1 teaspoon
 minced fresh sage
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
Fresh lemon juice, to taste

TO MAKE GLUTEN-FREE: Omit the flour. Pour the stock and wine directly to the caramelized shallots and bring to a simmer. Make a slurry by whisking together 2 teaspoons cornstarch with 2 tablespoons of stock or water in a small bowl, then whisk this into the simmering liquid. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes, until thickened.

Heat the oil or butter in a skillet over medium-low heat. Add the shallots and cook until tender and golden, stirring frequently, 10 to 12 minutes. Sprinkle in the flour and dried sage, if using, and stir constantly for a minute or two, until the mixture darkens a shade and smells nutty. Whisk in the vegetable stock. Bring to a boil then reduce the heat to an active simmer, whisking occasionally, until thickened to your liking. This will take 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in the fresh sage, if using, salt, and pepper. Adjust the seasonings and add a squeeze of lemon juice if the flavors seem flat. Serve piping hot.

YIELD: About 1-1/2 cups, to serve 5 or 6

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up to a day in advance, stored in an airtight container and refrigerated.

Pumpkin Sherbet with Gingersnap-Pecan Crumble

Who wants a heavy baked dessert after a giant meal? I like pumpkin pie as much as anyone else, but I don't recall a Thanksgiving where I, stuffed, didn't have to force myself to eat it. My friend Laura Wing brought this sherbet to a recent dinner party and it was such a refreshing, exciting finish to our heavy meal—everyone that night agreed it would be perfect for Thanksgiving. Her version uses almond milk, which made for a deliciously light, vegan sherbet. I tried buttermilk and love its tangy effect on pumpkin. If you must have pie, try an ice cream one, using this as the filling in a gingersnap crust.

2 cups milk
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla
3/4 teaspoon freshly grated
nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
Pinch cloves
2 cups pumpkin puree
2-1/2 cups buttermilk
Gingersnap Pecan Crumble
(recipe below)

Combine the milk, sugars, cinnamon, vanilla, nutmeg, salt, and cloves in a saucepan over medium heat and whisk until the sugar dissolves. Whisk in the pumpkin, bring to a boil, and whisk constantly for 1 minute. Remove from the heat, let cool for a few minutes, then stir in the buttermilk. (If the mixture is too hot, the buttermilk will curdle.)

Transfer to a heat-safe container and refrigerate until chilled—at least one hour, or overnight. Then transfer it to an ice cream maker and churn according to package instructions, until thick. If you don't have an ice cream maker, pour the mixture into a deep baking dish and place it in the freezer. After 30 to 45 minutes, stir

the mixture with a rubber spatula, so as to encourage even freezing. Repeat every 30 minutes for about 2 hours, until frozen evenly. To make the mixture ultra smooth, puree the mixture in a blender or food processor towards the end of the freezing process.

Transfer to an airtight container and store in the freezer until ready to serve. It's best to remove it from the freezer 20-30 minutes before serving for it to soften up. To achieve a soft-serve-type consistency for serving, let thaw for 20 to 30 minutes, then blitz it in a blender or food processor again, just before serving.

To serve, divide ice cream among serving bowls or glasses, and sprinkle with 1 to 2 tablespoons of the crumble. Alternatively, fold the crumble into the full batch of sherbet while it's soft.

YIELD: 1 quart, to serve 6 to 8

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made up to 3 days in advance, though its consistency is best when served on the day it's made.

TO MAKE VEGAN: Substitute almond milk for the milk and buttermilk, using all 4-1/2 cups in the first step.

Gingersnap Pecan Crumble

15 gingersnaps, homemade or store bought
1/2 cup spiced pecans, such as Bourbon Pecans (p. 5)

Combine the cookies and pecans in a resealable bag. Use a flat-bottomed glass or rolling pin to pound into a coarse, crumbly mixtrue.

YIELD: 1 cup, serving 6 to 8

TO MAKE IN ADVANCE: Can be made several hours in advance.