

e-Book

THE PURÉES OF FALL THE HOLIDAY MEAL

CREATE A CLASSIC THANKSGIVING DINNER

By Diane Wolff Author of *Essential Puree - The A to Z Guidebook*

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THE PUREES OF FALL AN INTRODUCTION

Here is a collection of recipes for Fall. This is the time of the year when high school kids are back at football practice. The days are getting shorter. The Halloween decorations are up. If you are in a place where the leaves turn, the fall colors and the chill in the air are invigorating. If you live in Florida, as I do, it is getting too cool to go in the pool early in the morning without a dive suit.

As to the puree kitchen, with the change of seasons, the ingredients change. The cooking techniques change. The indoor grill is put away in favor of the electric pressure cooker.

Gone are the cookouts of summer. Game Day recipes and Thanksgiving cooking are on the menu. Soups are the savory snacks on the menu. The desserts are the iconic creations of autumn.

We here at Essential Puree believe in eating seasonally, using the fresh produce available in the markets. We celebrate the seasonal ingredient of the hard squash in many of its varieties.

(Frozen produce will do in places where ingredients cannot be obtained. Frozen produce works especially well in an electric pressure cooker.)

The seasonal vegetable of fall is the squash. The butternut squash, the pumpkin, the kabocha are loaded with nutrition and flavor. They are



colorful when set out in a display, in a vegetable arrangement for viewing, so the dysphagia patient may eat with the eyes.

The butternut is usually the star of the squash world, but I nominate my personal favorite, the kabocha. This is a hard green squash shaped like a half-flattened soccer ball. It has yellow and orange areas on the skin and

barnacle-like outgrowths, but do not be deterred. These do not affect flavor in any way. The flesh is a vivid coral, the flavor is richer and deeper than butternut.

Whether roasted, boiled or steamed, the kabocha has a flakier texture than the butternut.

Because of its sweetness, it makes the best miso soup I ever ate.

I was living in Tokyo as a newlywed, and at the suggestion of my husband, was going to bride school when I first discovered the kabocha squash.

I know bride school sounds retro, but bear with me. Many young Japanese women went to bride school to learn the skills necessary to run a household. Since Japanese cooking and flower arranging are traditional arts, attending the school was a way of studying Japanese traditions. It was also a way of escaping isolation. The program my husband attended was demanding and I was alone much of the time.

Bride school was where young women who were preparing for marriage went to learn traditional skills, such as cooking and flower arranging. You may think this sounds retro, but for me, it was a way of getting inside Japanese culture, and of course, practicing my Japanese.

Attending the school, I learned Japanese conversation. Japanese is one of the most difficult languages in the world. Call it the Olympics of languages. In shopping and teaching, I got a lot of practice. I bought my tofu from the neighborhood tofu maker. It was the best I have ever had.

We arrived in late summer. By early fall, I had discovered the kabocha. I love the taste of the squash and that is why I include it in recipes. It has a sweet flavor and its firm but flaky texture.

I was afraid of running out of the ingredient, so I began hoarding. I went to my local market and bought kabocha two at a time, until I had a dozen.

As the winter progressed, their number diminished. I used them one by one. I include recipe for Miso Pumpkin Soup from the Japanese kitchen.

The traffic police in Tokyo get a bowl of miso soup every day because it is believed to have detoxing powers and to rid the body of pollution. The Japanese diet has been called by medical researchers one of the healthiest in the world.

The balance of the sweet squash against the salty miso is a brilliant combination. You can make the kabocha soup in our Snacks & Shakes e-book and use it for the sauce in the lasagna recipe, if you desire.

I was teaching English when I lived in Tokyo. I had two students, young women who were the daughters of a Mitsubishi executive. English is



considered an important skill not only for executives, but also for young women seeking to make a good marriage.

My students loved having a Western *sensei* or teacher. They were very respectful, but laughed at my silly Western ways when I told them how much kabocha I had bought.

Oishii, I told them. Delicious. They were always well-prepared for class and tried very hard to master English, a difficult language for a foreigner to learn. These are my memories of a fall long ago, spent in an amazing city, Tokyo.

I hope you enjoy these fall recipes created for the dysphagia kitchen.



THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is the holiday of bounty. The hallmark of the holiday is an attitude of gratitude for the gifts of the natural world, in its most elementary form, the provision of food.

The symbol of the holiday is a cornucopia, with fruits and vegetables spilling out. We associate the holiday with warmth, the gathering of family and friends and good cheer.

The menu I have created for the holiday meal for the person with swallowing disorders is meant to allow the person to touch all the familiar notes of the traditional meal, only in the form of puree. It is

as though the meal has been created as a series of puddings, soups and sauces. The traditional is still part of the menu, the form is created in a new way, a new cuisine.

The idea is that gratitude and gathering is still part of the meal. The idea is to concentrate on the Thanksgiving, for the bounty of nature is still available.

To my knowledge, this is an original theme and an original approach from Essential Puree. This small volume, this eBook for Thanksgiving, is an invitation to the person with the swallowing disorder to be one with the community. The idea is not to feel deprived, but to feel the bounty and to feel gratitude.

One still proceeds from starters through the main meal to the dessert. One still may have leftovers by pureeing a piece of bread and some turkey and adding a little pureed cranberry sauce, all thickened to the right consistency. You have the leftover turkey sandwich.

One still may have the leftover turkey soup by pureeing some of the turkey with broth and some of the carrots. The pressure cooker renders this very easy, for one may add a little onion and a little diced celery and at the end of six minutes, place the soup in a blender and make a delicious puree.

Before eating a meal in Japan, the gathering at the table recite a phrase, Itadakimasu. It means, "We humbly receive." It is a way of thanking nature. A wonderful idea for all of us.

Thickening Wine and Other Alcoholic Beverages

Please remember that not all persons with swallowing disorders are prohibited from having alcohol. If you are allowed by your healthcare provider, if this does not interfere with other medication, then by all means, get the proper thickeners from Slo Drinks and thicken your wine and beer

About Pressure Cooking

Each volume of the Quickies for Caregivers[™] series focuses on a different method of healthy cooking. The method for Fall is the pressure cooker. I mean the new electric pressure cookers, not the old-fashioned ones that sat on the stove-top and were scary to use.

The pressure cooker is ideal for the dysphagia kitchen because it produces moist food that is intensely flavorful with its nutrients preserved. The foods puree extremely well.

The pressure cooker is based on the physics of steam, according to Matt Simon, a science writer for *Wired* magazine.

What's happening is the pressure cooker isn't only heating the liquid that naturally appears inside the food. It's forcing steam through the grub as well, and steam simultaneously cooks it and keeps it hydrated. As an added bonus, the extreme pressure tends to keep food together instead of pulverizing it.

By pressure cooking, you're using physics to open up a whole new culinary world—moist meats, tough foods like beans that untoughen right quick, onions caramelized in a flash.

The new electric pressure cookers plug in. They have a small footprint and are versatile, good for cooking a variety of recipes, including meat, fish, vegetables, soups, and stews. Some have a timer. Some have preset cooking options as well as a timer that allows the cook to choose the desired cooking time.



These new appliances are a handy kitchen tool. You place food inside. You turn It on, it cooks, it turns itself off and keeps the food warm.

They come in a variety of cheerful colors. I bought orange. They come in a variety of sizes, four-quart, six-quart, eight-quart and ten quart.

They are moderately priced and are available both online and at local stores such as Target and Wal-Mart. The online shopping sites (such as HSN.com and QVC.com often have specials on pressure cookers and some offer easy payments.

I researched the convenience meals from commercial food companies available in vacuum packs and cans in pharmacies, the pharmacy section of supermarkets and discount stores. I am being kind when I say that these pre-packaged products lack taste. As a reviewer, I would use one word: AWFUL!

The savings that the average household would achieve with an investment in this particular kitchen appliance pays for the appliance in a very short time. The improvement in the diet and the patient's engagement with food would be more than enough to justify the expense.

A second benefit is that the appliance simplifies clean-up. Most of the meals can be made in one pot. Most of the appliances are dishwasher safe for the cooking pot. Most of the appliances offer the option to buy a stainless steel pot, because most come with a non-stick pot.

Because I review kitchen appliances for the dysphagia kitchen on the Essential Puree website, I have tested electric pressure cookers. One of them is a Wolfgang Puck.

It works very well. The other two brands I have tested are Cook's Essential and Elite Bistro. I got the four-quart size so I could make four to six portions, but they come in six quart and eight quart models for those in healthcare institutions who might want to create larger amounts.

5 Tips for a Cooking Day in the Dysphagia Kitchen

How to Save Money and Time and Eat Really Well Without Getting Bored in the Kitchen

So you're time-challenged. You think you don't have enough time to cook. You are not alone.

But analyze this. You get in the kitchen and you cook. You save time and money and you get the added benefit of relaxing. Cooking may be therapy. This is a big secret.

Cooking can be an escape. It can make you popular. I like to be in the kitchen with music. I dance in the kitchen. If I am going to consume calories, I dance them off.

Sometimes my recipes, as in my e-book *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, contain suggestions for sound tracks.

I am making a point here. Done correctly, cooking is fun.

A good cook is never lonely. You have family and friends dying to be with you, sample your wares, admire you, befriend you.

And you save on gas money going to crowded markets, freezing in the air conditioning, and schlepping the groceries. Or you don't have to get in lane at a drive-through, advertising to the entire world that you have succumbed to the fast food junk food disease and are therefore slowly adversely affecting the health of not only yourself but also your family.

Oh, don't critique me. I am channeling a satirical comedian, poking fun at everyone.

Here are five tips for pleasure in cooking in the dysphagia kitchen: It need not be a chore. It's all in the attitude.

- 1. Plan ahead. Decide what you are cooking and have the ingredients on hand. I would always cook two entrees, or an entree and a sauce, and entree and a veggie or two veggies such as a carb and a green veggie, or a dessert and a sauce. I would keep it simple. When you are just starting out, cook the things you like to cook. Or cook the things you or the patient or the family most enjoy. Chicken pot pie. Every time you master a dish, you will be proud. So go for it.
- 2. Shop the day before or two days before. Check the pantry and the fridge to make sure you have all the ingredients. These can be bought in advance on a regular shopping day. For the cooking day: buy fresh last. Buy the protein and the veggies and anything you need to make a dessert, such as milk or ricotta cheese, fresh. The fresher the better. You will taste it.
- 3. Allow room for mistakes. Especially when the recipe is new to you. You can always save a dish. Don't strive for perfection. Besides, some of the best things I ever created in the kitchen came about because of an accident or even a mistake. This can be something you forgot to buy at the grocery store. Or, something someone in the whole foods store recommended to you, but you never tried before. Sometimes it is an inspiration. You have this urge to add

mushrooms to a sauce that didn't ask for mushrooms. Go ahead, take the dive. Trust your palate. Cook on the fly. Adjust. Don't be afraid to improvise, and by that I mean, make a substitution. This has to be within reason, especially for baking. Baking is all about rules. It is exact. It is chemistry. It is food science. On the other hand, in the world of the savory, especially soups and stews, anything goes. If you don't have cilantro, go with parsley. How bad can it be? If you don't have shallots, use onions. If you don't have fresh, try frozen. You make it to suit yourself. Bliss!

- 4. Allow enough time. This is really important. Have your storage vessels assembled. We recommend glass storage dishes with covers. We recommend batch cooking, four to six servings, two in the fridge for serving within five days to a week. So be ready to put the food, properly labelled, notated on your white board, for storage in the freezer. Here is where the deep satisfaction comes in. You will have a stocked freezer of delicious food, so you never have to run to the store at the last minute, or order in from the takeout joint or pick up something less than fabulous from the deliciounter. You don't have to get in line. A good meal or snack is always on hand.
- 5. If anything can be made ahead, make it ahead. This is where the making of sauces comes in, or homemade stock. The recipe books give instructions for homemade stock in the pressure cooker. It is really easy. If you don't have homemade on hand, have a good version of the item in the pantry. (See the front of the Essential

Puree Guidebook for stocking the pantry for the dysphagia kitchen.)

6. I know I said five tips, but here is a sixth. If you need a little help, get someone to help. Let them peel the carrots or chop the onions, in a food processor, if necessary. Once the people in my mom's house started smelling what I was cooking, I had volunteers. Everyone wanted to learn how to make my recipes at home and everyone wanted a taste. So I encourage you to get in the kitchen and rattle those pots and pans!

Miso Butternut Squash Soup

Level: Easy

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4

This is a classic recipe for miso soup. I must have made this a thousand times. Still, I am giving you a quickie version that you can make in an electric pressure. This is ideal for the busy cook.

Quickie for Caregiver tip: If you are really time-constrained, buy one of the boxed butternut squash soups. This is already a smooth puree. Warm the soup in a saucepan on the stovetop.

Puree the tofu cubes in the of a blender with two cups of the soup and return the pureed soup to the saucepan. This will boost the nutritional content. Follow the directions for mixing miso with warm broth and add it to the soup. Ready in under five minutes.

From Scratch is still quick. To make the soup from kabocha or butternut squash, here's the recipe.

Ingredients

- ½ kabocha squash, seeds removed, cut into one inch dice, 2 cups (or butternut squash)
- 1 medium yellow onion, cut into half-moon slices
- 1 medium carrot, cut into medium slices





- 1 stalk celery, the inner tender stalk with no strings, cut into medium slices (optional)
- 1 package lower sodium vegetable broth
- ¼ cup white miso
- 1 square of silken tofu, cut into one inch cubes

Directions

Add the squash and 1 cup of the broth to a pressure cooker and cook for 6 minutes.

Allow pressure to come down. Allow squash to cool. When squash is cool, remove the skin. This is easier after cooking.

Add the rest of the vegetables, onion and carrot, with celery optional, and the broth to the pressure cooker. Cook for six minutes. In the pitcher of a a high speed blender. If using a regular blender, blend the ingredients together then warm the soup in a saucepan on the stove. When working with hot liquids in a blender, be careful of the steam. Be sure to vent the blender, as hot liquid will expand and go all over the kitchen. Safety first..

Put the miso in a small mixing bowl, take a quarter cup of the broth and whisk water into miso, mixing it in as you go along. Miso will forms a loose paste.

For the Puree

Into the pitcher of a high speed blender, add squash and a cup of cooking liquid. Place the squash puree in a mixing bowl.



Add the veggies and the tofu. Using a kitchen towel or the vent on the lid of the pitcher, allow the steam to escape without allowing the liquid to escape. Pulse a few times and then puree. For a completely smooth puree, run the soup through a mesh sieve.

Place the squash puree, the pureed veggies and the miso in the pot of the pressure cooker.

Set the pressure cooker on five minutes. Leave it open. Bring soup up to the boil and then turn it off. You do not want to boil miso.

To Thicken

Miso soup is traditionally a broth soup, not thick. The silken tofu acts as a thickener. Depending on the desired level of thickness, one may also have to use commercial thickeners. See thickening instructions on the NDD Diet post on the Essential Puree website.

Allergy Note: Tofu is a soy product. Those with allergies to soy should not include it. Cooked shrimp, fish or scallops or any other protein may be added as desired before the puree.

Turkey Breast with Garlic and Sage

Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 20 minutes

Level: Easy Serves 6

A turkey breast is more manageable than a whole bird. If you like dark meat, use the same herbs, but buy a package of drumsticks. Prepare in the same manner and see cooking time below.

Ingredients

- 1 turkey breast, 2 pounds (I had the butcher remove the bone)
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. flat leaf parsley
- a bunch of fresh sage leaves
- 1 clove garlic
- ½ onion cut into rough chunks
- 1 carrot cut into chunks
- 1 stalk celery cut into chunks
- 1½ cups low sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup white wine, optional

Directions

I have the butcher take the turkey breast off the bone and tie it up so it will fit in the pot of my four-quart pressure cooker. I leave the skin on for flavor during cooking, but remove for the puree.

Liberally rub the turkey breast with olive oil, salt and pepper. Tuck 3 sage leaves under the skin.

Turn pressure cooker on high or sear function and brown the turkey breast in the pot of the pressure cooker, 3 or 4 minutes to a side.

Place breast on rack in roasting pan. Add 1. cups chicken or turkey stock and ¼ cup white wine to the pot. Add the onions, celery, carrots and a few sage leaves. This will give you the base for your turkey gravy.

Close the lid of the pressure cooker and set the timer for 20 minutes.

When cooking stops and the pressure cooker beeps, use quick release method to open the pressure cooker, by opening the vent and allowing steam to escape. When the pot comes down from pressure, open the pot, remove the turkey breast with a fork and a lifter and set on a plate to cool. You do not want extended cooking time with turkey, as the protein will become rubbery.

Using a spider, remove the vegetables from the pan juices and set aside to puree or discard.

Reserve clear pan juices, probably about a cup and a half. Pan juices can be used for puree or made into a gravy.



To make a gravy: Set the pressure cooker to high. Allow the liquid to come to a boil. Turn to low. Stir 4 tablespoons of Wondra flour (or pastry flour) into 3 tablespoons of cool water to make a slurry.

Drizzle the slurry into the pan juices stirring all the while. Allow the pan juices to come to the boil and cook for three minutes.

Turn of the heat and allow to cool for five minutes. Using a ladle, move the gravy from the pot into a covered glass storage container. Use for turkey puree. Stir into mashed potatoes.

For the Purée

Allow the turkey to cool while you make the homemade turkey gravy from the recipe on this page.

When turkey is cool, until the twine. Remove the skin and discard. This is no good for the puree. Slice it down. One serving of protein is four to six ounces, depending on the size of the appetite.

To serve for a holiday meal: Cut up the turkey meat and add it to the bowl of a mini food processor. Pulse ten times to break up the turkey.

Add ½ cup of gravy, pulse three times to incorporate and then puree until smooth. To get the perfect consistency, add a tablespoon of gravy at a time.

To bind the puree, add one scoop or one pump of Instant Thickener. Combine thoroughly.

Serve with a side of mashed potatoes with gravy stirred in. Or serve with sweet potatoes.



For Service

A serving is a four ounce portion of turkey puréed and ¼ to ½ cup of turkey gravy. ½ cup of mashed potatoes may be stirred with three tablespoons of turkey gravy.

If you like cranberry sauce, get your favorite. Make sure the cranberry sauce is puréed to smooth texture. Jellied cranberry sauce is already smooth and is a pudding texture so it does not have to be pureed nor does it have to be thickened.

The instructions are for homemade or whole fruit cranberry sauce that may have whole berries or orange zest. Add a tablespoon of Instant Thickener to a half cup of cranberry sauce. Add some cranberry sauce to a bite of turkey and gravy for the complete holiday flavor profile.

For the Freezer

Take two slices of the roast turkey breast, four to six ounces for a serving.

Place in covered glass freezer bowl.

Add a half to a whole cup of Turkey Gravy or pan juices. Place in freezer.

To serve, thaw in fridge overnight. Puree as usual. Thicken to bind the puree.

Your entrée is ready to go.

A two pound turkey breast should make 6 servings.



You have leftovers of the holiday meal and you have extra servings on hand for a meal that can be ready in ten minutes!

Turkey Thighs

For those who prefer dark meat. Make two pounds turkey thighs in the same manner as making the turkey breast.

Rub the meat with salt, white pepper and powdered sage. Be generous with the seasoning.

Add olive oil to the pot, two tablespoons, and brown on both sides in the pressure cooker until seared. About three minutes per side. You can brown the thighs one at a time in the pot of the pressure cooker. Turn it on for twenty minutes, allow it to heat up, and do one thigh at a time.

Or, to save time, use a large ten-inch skillet and brown both thighs at the same time.

To the pot of the pressure cooker, add stock, wine if desired, aromatics and vegetables in the same amount as the recipe above.

Set the pressure cooker to high and cook for eighteen minutes. Allow the pressure to come down naturally.

Remove thighs from pressure cooker and allow to cool on plate. Remove skin. This is not good for the puree.

Remove meat from bone. It will come off the bone easily.

Turn the pressure cooker on. Make the gravy as directed above. Reserve a cup of the the pan juices to puree two servings.



For the Puree

Slice it down. One serving of protein is four to six ounces, depending on the size of the appetite.

Place four to six ounces in the bowl of a mini food processor and pulse until the meat is broken up. Add four tablespoons of pan juice or gravy and pulse a few times to combine. Then puree, adding another four tablespoons as needed for the smooth puree. Bind with instant thickener as in the instructions above.



Homemade Mashed Potatoes

Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 6 minutes

Level: Easy

Yield: 4 one-half cup servings

This recipe can be doubled.

Who would think that making mashed potatoes involves cooking technique. I give you a choice to save time and labor.

Use an electric pressure cooker. This takes seven minutes and renders the potatoes very soft.

A four-quart pressure cooker is plenty big enough and is an excellent tool for the dysphagia kitchen.

Technique is important for puréeing the potatoes. Use a potato ricer or a food mill.

If you use a mini food processor, you have to go a few seconds at a time. Watch the potatoes as the sharp blades of the food processor will cut the molecules in such a way that you have created a dish that has the texture of library glue. This is not good for the swallow. You will have to throw it away.

Be warned! Technique is everything when it comes to the humble but delicious comfort food of mashed potato.

Ingredients

- 2 pound potatoes, Yukon gold, peeled, cut into two inch pieces
- 1 cup water
- Salt, one pinch

Directions

Add all ingredients into electric pressure cooker.

Close the lid. Cook on high for six minutes. Allow to come down from pressure or use quick release method. Allow steam to escape. Be careful with escaping steam.

Potatoes will be dry, not soggy.

When potatoes cool, put them through a potato ricer, one cup at a time, into a bowl.

This is the easiest and the fastest way to get great texture.

For the Mash

Once potatoes have been through the potato ricer, add:

- 2 pats of butter or margarine (2 tbsp.)
- ½ cup of warm milk or cream. I use whole milk.
- 1 scant teaspoon of good mayonnaise (Cathie G's secret ingredient)
- Salt and white pepper to taste

Stir all ingredients together until well combined and fluffy.



Tip: If you are time-challenged, do not peel potatoes. Cut them up and cook them as directed above. When you open the pressure cooker and the potatoes cool, using a kitchen towel, wipe them and remove the skins. Discard the skins. Put the potatoes through a potato ricer following directions above.

Note: It is best not to put potatoes through a food processor. They may get gummy. This is not desirable for the swallow.

Tip: Mashed potatoes freeze better when mixed with a gravy or a protein and a gravy.

When I make such dishes as turkey, I purée the protein in the bowl of a mini food processor. I then combine thoroughly with the mashed potato. Protein and potato may then be frozen.

Quickie for Caregiver Shortcut

For a Quickie Go-To Ingredient: When you don't have time for the From Scratch recipe, try Organic Mashed Potatoes made from a boxed potato flake, ready in 5 minutes. The brand name is Edward and Sons. Another good brand is Bob's Red Mill Organic Potato Flakes.

Do not over-whip them, as they will get gummy. Prepare them according to package directions, but add a teaspoon of good mayo for richness. These are quite tasty and can also be made from the reserved pan juices from cooking the turkey.

Sweet Potatoes with Orange

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 90 minutes

Level: Easy Serves 4

The sweet potato is loaded with nutrients and is a favorite in our house. We like it flavored with orange and cinnamon, to add a little tartness as a balance to the sweet. I bake three or four good sized potatoes at a time, for the four servings. This is easy.

Ingredients

- 4 medium sweet potatoes, approximately the same size (1 ½ lbs.)
- 2 tbsp. olive or vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp. orange marmalade (preferably lower sugar)
- 2 tbsp. orange juice
- Shake of cinnamon

Directions

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Wash and dry potatoes and cut off sharp ends or blemishes.

Puncture each potato three times with knife to allow steam to escape.

Put oil in a shallow bowl and brush outside of potato with oil.

Cover with aluminum foil. Line up on baking sheet, leaving distance between for air to circulate.



Bake 90 minutes, until potatoes are soft. Remove from oven and allow to cool enough to handle.

Open foil and remove skins, placing potato in bowl.

For the Purée

Run the sweet potatoes one cup at a time through a potato ricer to remove any fibers remaining in the potato. Return to the mixing bowl.

To the marmalade, add two tablespoons of warm water and run through a mesh sieve to remove any zest of the orange.

Add the marmalade and the orange juice to the riced sweet potato. Add the cinnamon. Combine thoroughly using a fork.

Tangerine juice may be substituted for orange juice.

For Additional Sweetener

Sometimes sweet potatoes need sweetening. A tablespoon of honey dissolved in a tablespoon of warm water may be added. Stevia to taste may be added. Brown sugar to taste may be added.

The sweet potato purée should now be a smooth creamy pudding consistency.

The batch of sweet potato should be divided into individual servings in glass storage containers, dated, and put in the freezer. The USE BY date is for one month.

8 servings. 2 servings go in fridge, each dated for one week.



Tip: This is an excellent medium for purée for all sorts of savory dishes, as it gives any protein a creamy consistency.

Mushroom Onion Green Beans

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 18 minutes

Level: Easy Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 lb. green beans
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 large tablespoons Italian bread crumbs
- Sprinkle of parmesan cheese

Directions

Trim string beans of ends and strings. Steam to softness, but with beans still retaining color. I use a three-tiered vegetable steamer where each tier has one layer of beans and all beans steam evenly.

For years, I used a folding steamer that fits inside a larger pot.

Remove beans from steamer. You may plunge the beans into an ice bath if you wish to set the color. This is a bowl filled with ice and water. Use a mesh sieve.

In a sauté pan, place thinly sliced garlic and allow to cook for one minute, until slightly soft, but not browned.



Add beans to pan and swirl in garlic oil. Add lemon juice to taste. I like lemony beans, so I use more. Add bread crumbs and parmesan cheese to make a sauce.

For the Purée

Allow beans to cool. Place a cup of beans and several tablespoons of water or broth into the bowl of a mini food processor or the pitcher of a blender.

Pulse five times to break up the beans.

Purée until smooth, adding water or broth if necessary.

Bind the purée with a half scoop or a half pump of Instant Thickener.

Warm Cabbage, Beet and Carrot Slaw

Level: Easy

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time:: 6 minutes

Serves 4

This is a braised cabbage dish, sweet and sour, and can be served along with many other entrees.

The apples make it a fall dish.

Ingredients

- ½ small red cabbage, sliced thinly
- 1 cup of pickled beets
- 1 carrot, cut in half lengthwise and sliced thinly
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored and sliced thinly, optional
- 2 tbs. safflower oil or coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon of balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons of honey
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar (optional)
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup apple juice
- Pinch of salt to balance out the sweetness
- 1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses (optional)



Directions

Using a mandolin or a food processor, slice the cabbage thinly. Thinly slice the apple and the carrot. The pickled beets, Aunt Nellie's brand, sliced or whole, are pressure cooked to make them tender for the puree.

In the pot of a pressure cooker, add cabbage, beets, apple and carrots.

Add water, apple juice, oil, balsamic vinegar and honey.

Close the lid and turn on the pressure cooker for six minutes.

When the pressure cooker completes its cycle, allow to come down from pressure or use the quick release method.

Open the lid and allow to cool.

For the Purée

Add a cup of the cooled slaw into the bowl of a food processor with two tablespoons of the cooking liquid and pulse.

Puree until smoothness is achieved with no lumps of veggies. If the mixture needs added liquid, use reserved cooking liquid from the pressure cooker, one or two tablespoons at a time.

This dish has a beautiful color from the red cabbage and the beets.

To puree larger amounts, such as three cups at a time, the pitcher of a high speed blender or a nutrition extractor such as a NutriBullet, will purée larger amounts.



When the slaw is pureed, add a scoop of Instant Thickener. For service, place a half cup of the slaw in a bowl. Can be warmed at 50% power for 20 seconds.

Freeze in individual glass bowls, thaw in fridge, warm to serve.



Pumpkin Flan

A perfect ending to a holiday meal.

This is a deconstructed pumpkin pie, a custard. You do not need to puree this dessert. It fits Levels 4, 5 and 6 of the National Dysphagia Diet (NDD). As always, clear this dish your healthcare provider.

Ingredient note: I use St. Dalfour Organic Caramel as a convenience. It contains natural sugars as opposed to refined sugar. This caramel sauce is a quickie go to ingredient. It is honey consistency. As I have been told by three speech language pathologists, if the caramel is of the same thickness as the custard, the dish is safe for the swallow. Caramel sauce is optional.

One could substitute butternut squash soup for the pumpkin puree, for a lighter flan.

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups whole milk (Coconut milk may be substituted)
- 4 large egg(s), room temperature, lightly beaten
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 3/4 cup pumpkin puree, unseasoned
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon, ground (Ceylon cinnamon has the best flavor)
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice, ground
- 1 ½ teaspoons ginger, ground



- one pinch of ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 jar St. Dalfour Organic Caramel Sauce
- 1 ½ cups water for the bottom of the pressure cooker pot

Directions

Using six 6-ounce (3/4-cup) custard ramekins (available in local stores and on Amazon).

Make an aluminum foil sling for each of three 6 oz. ramekins. Do this by folding a foot-long piece of aluminum foil in thirds. Place under the ramekin. Hold straight up and fold over. This is your device for removing the ramekins from the pressure cooker.

Add a teaspoon of the Caramel Sauce into the bottom of each ramekin. Swirl the ramekin so the caramel covers the bottom.

Whisk eggs and syrup in a large bowl until smooth. Add the spices and salt to the milk or cream and whisk until blended thoroughly. Whisk in the pumpkin puree.

Divide the custard mixture among the cups.

Cut a disk of aluminum foil that will cover the top of the custard in each ramekin. Use the ramekin as a stencil. Place the cover over the top of each custard. This will prevent a skin from forming on top of the custard.



Place steaming rack in the pressure cooker. (Rack comes with the pressure cooker). Pour water into the bottom of the pot of the pressure cooker. It will come to just below the steaming rack.

Place sling around each custard cup and place cup on the steaming rack. Fold down sling so that it does not interfere with the closing of the pressure cooker.

Close the lid, close the vent. Turn the pressure cooker on to High. Cook for twenty minutes.

Allow to return to normal by itself. About 10 minutes.

Open the lid, remove the ramekins and allow them to cool for an hour.

Place in fridge for four hours before serving.

To serve, gently remove the aluminum foil cover from the custard. Run a knife under warm water and dry. Loosen custard by running knife around the edge of the ramekin. Using a saucer or a shallow bowl, turn the custard out. The caramel will be on top.



Cherry Pie Oh My!

Some years back, I spent a summer writing in a log cabin. Writing is solitary work even in Hemingway country, the part of Michigan where Hemingway grew up.

While writing away in the North Country, I visited artisanal food manufacturers. Some of the I fruit growers speculate that the taste of the fruit grown in the North Country comes from the minerals left over from the glacier that covered North America during the Ice Age. I believe this theory. There is something in the Michigan soil that makes the flavor sing.

Traverse City, Michigan, is home to the Cherry Festival. The cherries are delicious. I visited American Spoon, back when Larry Forgione, the chef/inspiration for the company was cooking in the Bill Clinton White House.

I tried American Spoon Fruit Perfect Sour Cherries. If you have the time and budget, these cherries are worth ordering.

Another good choice is Beekman 1802 Farm to Pantry Tart Cherry Filling. This is available in local stores, such as Target.

Neither one of these is loaded with high quantities of sugar and preservatives, as are the kind on the supermarket shelves. For those who want to make cherry pie filling from scratch, here is a quickie recipe for a cherry pie filling that can be made in the pressure cooker in a few minutes.



How to make a pie without making a pie

You make a pureed crust made from shortbread cookies. You make a pureed filling. You arrange the crust and the filling in a glass serving dish in layers. The pie may be warmed at 50% power for twenty seconds in the microwave. You may add thickened ice cream if you like your pie a la mode. You have a deconstructed pie, beautiful to look at, delicious to taste. Oh My!



The Deconstructed Cherry Pie

Ingredients

- 1 jar American Spoon Fruit Perfect Sour Cherries or your favorite brand
- A package of Walker's Scottish Shortbread cookies
- 1 tablespoon melted unsalted butter, margarine or vegetable oil

For the Puree

The Filling

Take the Fruit Perfect Sour Cherries and empty the jar into the mixing bowl of a mini food processor, or the small pitcher of a flat-bottomed blender such as the Ninja. ADD A TABLESPOON OF WATER. Puree until smooth. Adjust sweetening to taste using liquid stevia or honey, as you wish.

The Crust

Take 2 Walkers Scottish Shortbread squares and use them for your crust. The reason I choose this brand is that it is extremely short, meaning, it has a lot of butter in it so it is moist as it purees and with the proper buzzing, it purees very smoothly with no grains. Use 1 tablespoon of sour cream or melted butter. Pulse a few times to incorporate. Puree it to a smooth texture.



Fill the bottom of a glass serving dish with the pureed crust. I use the type of dishes that have their own covers. Cover the crust. Put it in the freezer to tighten up.

Ten minutes later, remove from the freezer and add the cherry pie filling.

You now have a glass dish with a two-layer dessert, the cherry pie and the crust. The perfect bite consists of going down the two layers so the spoon has both filling and crust on each bite. Each bite is two separate flavors.

Homemade Cherry Filling In a Pressure Cooker

If you do not order from American Spoon, you can make your own cherry pie filling. It only takes 15 minutes and therefore qualifies as a Quickie recipe. Commercially prepared cherry pie fillings are loaded with sugar and preservatives. It is really easy for the time-challenged caregiver to make this fruit filling. It purees easily.

Substitute frozen organic pitted cherries from the whole foods store. These have great flavor but they do not have the tart undertone that make the Michigan cherry superb.

To make your own filling, take two cups of frozen cherries, add 1 cup of water and a teaspoon fresh lemon juice, a pinch of salt, liquid stevia or honey to taste to a pan and cook in a pressure cooker for six minutes.

When the pot comes down from pressure, open the pot and allow the steam to escape. When the sauce has cooled for a few minutes, add a



cornstarch slurry. This consists of 1 tablespoon cornstarch thoroughly blended with 1 tablespoon cold water, not ice water.

Turn on the warm function and bring the sauce to the simmer. Simmer for two minutes until the cornstarch reaches its full thickening potential.

The fruit filling should thicken to pudding consistency. If it is not pudding consistency, then use instant thickeners of either the powder or gel variety to get the correct consistency.

Allow this to cool. Add a cup to the small bowl of a mini food processor. Pulse a few times to break down. Then puree.

The filling is then added to the dish with the crust in the same manner as with the prepared filling. The perfect bite is the same. The spoon goes down into the dish. The spoon contains some crust and some fruit on the same bit.

As long as both elements of the dish are of the same consistency, this is safe for the swallow according to the SLPs and dietitian with whom I consulted.

The Mini Pecan Pie

Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 12 Minutes Level: Intermediate Yield: 2 servings

This holiday favorite can be made in a quickie version in the pressure cooker. For convenience and space-saving, I use a 4-quart electric pressure cooker.

The Filling

First you make the filling. Many recipes for pecan pie call for corn syrup. This is not a favored ingredient in the Essential Puree kitchen. I use maple syrup. Another possibility is Lyle's Golden Syrup, the British favorite for holiday baking. Also good, Steen's cane syrup, a staple in Louisiana cooking.

I make the filling in a 5 inch pyrex glass bowl. I create an aluminum foil sling, folding over a two-foot by one-foot piece of aluminum foil into thirds, and wrapping it around the glass dish, then folding it down into a handle. (This is for safe removal of the hot dish from the hot pot.)

Place the bowl with the sling on a rack in the pressure cooker.

The Crust

When the filling cools, place a serving of pureed crust on a plate and turn out the pie. Voila! You have pecan pie.



Ingredients

The Filling

- ¼ cup real maple syrup (or Lyle's Golden Syrup or Steen's cane syrup)
- 2/3 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 2 tablespoons safflower oil or almond oil
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 large egg yolk, lightly beaten
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup pecan butter
- 1 pinch of salt

Directions

In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the filling ingredients until incorporated.

Divide the filling mixture between three small ramekins (6-ounce or 3/4-cup). These are easily available in grocery stores or on Amazon.

Place aluminum foil slings around each ramekin. See Pumpkin Flan recipe for instructions on how to make aluminum slings.

Insert steaming rack into the pot of a pressure cooker.

Place a cup and a half of water in the bottom of the pot.



Close the lid, turn on and set timer for 12 minutes of pressure When the beeper sounds, turn vent to allow pressure to escape. Remove lid. Using the aluminum sling, remove bowl and cool on a rack.

The Crust

1 recipe pureed graham cracker crust

Yield: six small ramekin crusts

- 1 1/4 cup graham cracker crumbs
- cup brown sugar, I used organic
- ½ teaspoon good cinnamon
- ½ cup of melted unsalted butter or Smart Balance (no trans-fats)
- ½ cup of simmering water
- 1 oz. pumps of Instant gel thickener, nectar or honey consistency, to bind the crust

Directions for the Crust

Place a cup and a quarter of graham cracker crumbs into the bowl of a mini food processor.

Crumbs are available in a package or you may use 20 graham crackers and break them up into the bowl of a mini food processor. Pulse ten times to break up crackers. Process until the crumbs turn into a fine sand.

Add the brown sugar and pulse to combine with crumbs.



Pour the ¼ cup of water into the bowl to moisten the crumbs. Wait a minute to allow the crumbs to soften. Puree to combine.

Pour the melted butter or margarine into the bowl and puree until smooth.

This is your crust. Taste. Adjust sweetening. Please note: I did not add salt, which is traditional with pie crust, because the graham crackers did not seem to need salt.

Add .5 oz. pump of the gel thickener to the bowl and puree to combine. As conditions change from one locale to another, it is possible that one might need a little bit more thickener. You do not want the crust to get too stiff, as that will be difficult for the swallow. This is a judgment call.

The pie crust should have a soft pudding-like texture and maintain a pudding shape. It should not be loose and liquid. It should have a pleasant pie crust taste, slightly sweet and flavorful from the cinnamon. It will contrast with the filling. When the filling is made, it will also have the same texture.

Transfer crust to a covered glass storage bowl, 5 inches. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

The crust will set up in the refrigerator.

Glass is better for storing thickened food items, as the thickener will stick to plastic.

When the filling cools, prepare individual servings. In individual glass bowls, place two tablespoons of crust puree and smooth. Place four



tablespoons of pecan pie filling. Place a large dollop of thickened whipped topping.

Directions for Whipped Topping

Take a tub of So CocoWhip whipped topping, defrosted, and add 2 oz. of xanthum gum thickener. Stir thoroughly with a spoon. Will set up in ten minutes in fridge.

Whipped topping will have the texture of a light pudding. It needs to be slightly firm, so that it does not liquefy in the person's mouth. It has to have body for the swallow.

Whipped cream is not stable over time and will separate, so it is best to use the CocoWhip topping. It has no trans-fats, unlike the most popular brand of frozen whipped topping, the one in the blue container.

Ingredient Tip: Nut Butter If you are using store-bought pecan butter, check the texture. If it is not smooth, place the pecan butter in the bowl of the mini food processor and puree until smooth. If the nut butter needs a little help, add a half teaspoon of safflower oil or sunflower oil or almond oil.

It is easy to make your own pecan butter in a high speed blender such as a Vitamix or one of its clones, the commercial grade blenders now being made for the home market.

Use raw nuts or dry toasted nuts and follow directions and guidelines put out by the manufacturer for nut butter.

Swirl Away!

