

CONTEMPORARY *classics*

Take a break from the holiday rush with a cozy meal

Holiday planning can ruffle the feathers of even the most seasoned cook, so we've developed a delicious menu to give you a welcome respite from organizing parties. Our Three Sisters Casserole is a festive dish that feeds a crowd. Made with traditional Native American ingredients, it's seasonal and special, making it a great choice for last-minute gatherings of family or friends. Pair it with a tangy orange and fennel salad, then pass around naturally sweet Date-Nut Truffles for a satisfying meal that won't wreck your (still hectic!) schedule.

menu

Three Sisters Casserole

Pumpkin Seed Pesto

Fennel and Orange Salad with Walnuts

Date-Nut Truffles

BY MYRA KORNFELD PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENÉE COMET

FOOD STYLING BY SUZANNE SPRINGER PROP STYLING BY AUDREY WEPPLER

THREE SISTERS CASSEROLE

Serves 6 • Vegan

A Native American expression, "three sisters" refers to the practice of growing beans, corn and squash together. This filling casserole can be frozen for an upcoming party or made fresh for dinner.

Polenta Topping

1½ cups yellow cornmeal

1 Tbs. chili powder

¾ tsp. salt

Filling

3 Tbs. olive oil, divided

**1 small onion, chopped
(about 1 cup)**

**1 large red or yellow bell
pepper, cut into 1-inch dice
(about 1 cup)**

**1 lb. kabocha squash, peeled
and cut into 1-inch cubes
(about 2 cups)**

**1 15-oz. can diced tomatoes
with chiles**

**2 cloves garlic, minced
(about 2 tsp.)**

1 tsp. ground coriander

1 tsp. ground cumin

½ tsp. salt

**1 15-oz. can pinto beans,
drained and rinsed**

**1 cup frozen corn kernels,
thawed**

1. To make Polenta Topping: Whisk together cornmeal, chili powder, salt and 4½ cups water in double boiler, or in large metal bowl over barely simmering water. Cook 40 minutes, or until polenta is thick and stiff, stirring 3 or 4 times. Remove from heat.

2. To make Filling: Preheat oven to 375F. Heat 2 Tbs. oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, and cook 7 minutes, or until softened, stirring often. Add bell pepper, and cook 5 minutes more, stirring often.

3. Stir in squash, tomatoes, garlic, coriander and cumin. Cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in ½ cup water and salt. Bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to medium low, and simmer, partially covered, 10 to 15 minutes, or until squash is tender. Stir in beans and corn, and cook 5 minutes, or until slightly thickened, stirring occasionally.

4. Coat 8x11-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Spread 2 cups polenta over bottom of prepared dish. Spoon squash mixture over polenta. Smooth remaining polenta (about 2½ cups) over top.

5. Score casserole into 6 squares with knife. Brush top with remaining 1 Tbs. oil. Bake 30 minutes, or until heated through and top is lightly browned. Serve with Pumpkin Seed Pesto (p. 62).

PER SERVING: 304 CAL; 8G PROT; 8G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 52G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 830MG SOD; 9G FIBER; 5G SUGARS

weeknight dish

Once known as the ultimate timesaver, casseroles are making a comeback at elegant dinner tables. Take them straight from oven to table without compromising your style with these nifty bakeware dishes:

- **Crate & Barrel Village Baker** (pictured on p. 60), \$18. 800.967.6696; crateandbarrel.com
- **Emile Henry Artisanale Green Baker**, \$35. 866.328.5412; surlatable.com
- **Sur La Table Round Wavy Baker**, \$50. 866.328.5412; surlatable.com


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tip

To clean food processors and blenders in a jiff after you've made a stick-to-the-sides recipe like pesto, fill the bowl or pitcher halfway with warm, soapy water, pulse five or six times, then empty and wash as usual. The swirling water will clean the blade and get into hard-to-reach corners so you don't have to scrub.

PUMPKIN SEED PESTO

Makes 1 cup • Vegan
30 minutes or fewer

This pesto adds an elegant, flavorful touch to the Three Sisters Casserole. Try it as an alternative to salsa on nachos as well. Pumpkin seed oil is stocked with other specialty oils in many supermarkets, but you can substitute olive oil in a pinch.

1 cup unsalted hulled (green) pumpkin seeds
1 cup coarsely chopped cilantro
½ cup toasted pumpkin seed oil
¼ cup fresh lime juice
1 tsp. salt
pinch cayenne

1. Toast pumpkin seeds in large skillet over medium heat, 4 to 5 minutes, or until puffed and golden, stirring constantly.
2. Transfer seeds to food processor. Add remaining ingredients, and process until smooth. Serve with Three Sisters Casserole, or store in airtight container in refrigerator for up to a week.

PER TABLESPOON: 108 CAL; 2G PROT; 11G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 2G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 147MG SOD; <1G FIBER; <1G SUGARS

FENNEL AND ORANGE SALAD WITH WALNUTS

Serves 6 • Vegan

The secret to this salad's success is to slice both the onions and fennel as thinly as possible. Pull out the slicing blade on your food processor or use a mandoline slicer, if you have one.

½ cup chopped walnuts
1 cup thinly sliced red onion, slices halved
4 medium navel oranges or tangerines
1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed and halved lengthwise, thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
1 cup chopped fresh parsley
¼ cup chopped kalamata olives
2 Tbs. olive oil
1 bunch watercress, trimmed

1. Toast walnuts in skillet over medium heat 3 to 4 minutes, or until browned and fragrant, stirring constantly.
2. Place onion in shallow bowl, cover with cold water, and let stand 15 minutes. Drain and pat dry.
3. Cut peel, including all white pith, from oranges with paring knife. Cut segments free from membranes over medium bowl to collect juice. Add orange segments to juice.
4. Add onion, fennel, parsley, olives and oil to oranges, and mix gently. Season with salt and pepper. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes for flavors to blend.
5. Divide watercress among 6 salad plates. Top with orange mixture, sprinkle with walnuts, and serve.
PER SERVING: 192 CAL; 4G PROT; 12.5G TOTAL FAT (1.5G SAT. FAT); 19G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 211MG SOD; 5G FIBER; 9G SUGARS

DATE-NUT TRUFFLES

Makes about 3 dozen • Vegan

Make these luscious mouthfuls at the start of the holiday season, then pop them into a resealable plastic bag, store in the freezer, and pull out as a quick dessert for guests.

- 1/2 cup chopped almonds**
- 2 cups pitted dates**
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon, divided**
- 1/4 tsp. almond extract**
- 1/2 cup unsweetened coconut flakes**
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder**
- 2 Tbs. sugar**

1. Toast almonds in skillet over medium heat 3 to 4 minutes, or until light brown. Set aside.
 2. Place dates in saucepan, and cover with water. Bring to a boil, remove from heat, cover, and let stand 10 minutes. Drain, reserving 1 Tbs. liquid. Transfer to food processor, and purée with reserved liquid until smooth.
 3. Transfer mixture to medium bowl. Stir in almonds, vanilla, 1/2 tsp. cinnamon, almond extract and pinch of salt.
 4. Spread coconut on plate. Sift cocoa, sugar and remaining 1/2 tsp. cinnamon into bowl.
 5. Form date mixture into 1-inch balls. Roll in coconut, and then in cocoa mixture. Serve immediately, or store in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or in freezer up to 2 months.
- PER TRUFFLE: 49 CAL; 1G PROT; 1.5G TOTAL FAT (0.5G SAT. FAT); 9G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 4MG SOD; 1G FIBER; 7G SUGARS

Myra Kornfeld enjoys putting a modern, healthy spin on classic comfort foods. ■

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