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MAGAZINE

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS, TO YOU, FROM EUROPE'S TOMATO FIELDS!

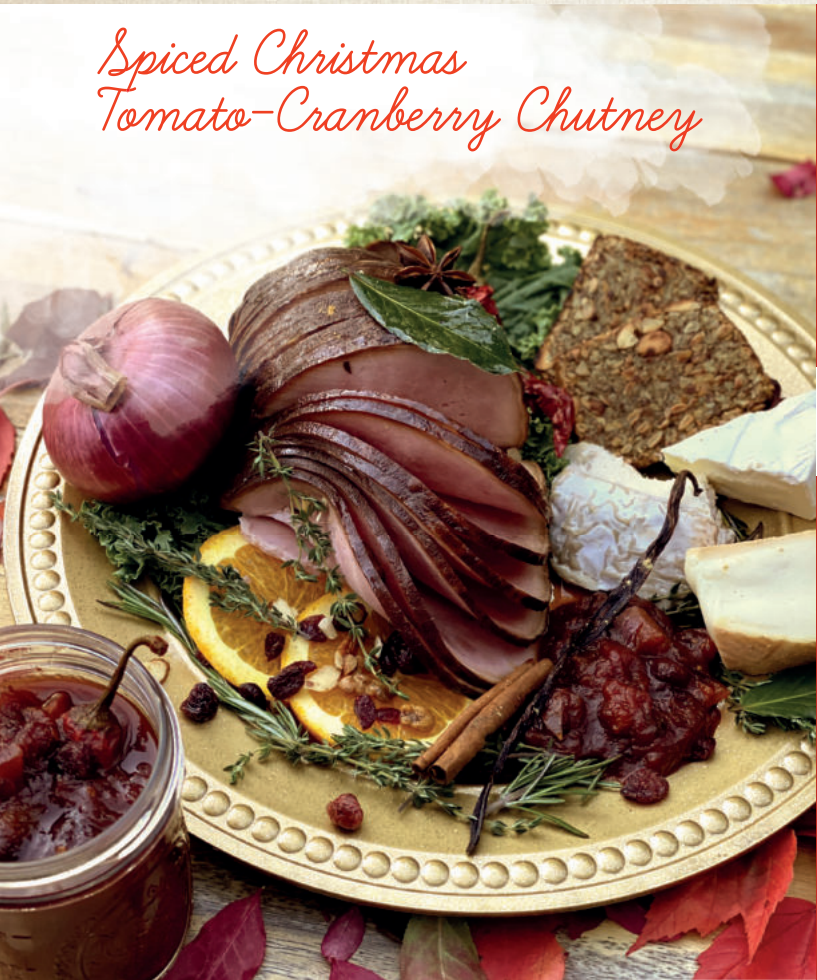
From Christmas to Chanukah, Kwanza to Diwali to the Winter Solstice, it's the time of the year when we gather together, in the warmth of the indoors, with family and friends. And even though we all celebrate with our own traditions - what they all have in common is feasting. It's the time of the year: cold outside, cozy (and delicious) inside. Whether you are gathering with family and friends or partying on Zoom, feasting is still the order of the day!

This year let's add something new to your holiday favorites: our tomato-cranberry chutney, from Chef Fabrizio! It's savory and sweet, spicy (or not, as you choose). You might like it alongside the Thanksgiving and Christmas turkey, your sliced honey-baked ham or with a festive cheeseboard: select three to five varied cheeses and arrange them on a platter accompanied by a handful of toasted nuts, some autumnal fruit, and a bowl of tomato-cranberry chutney.

And if you are making homemade burgers any time of the year, remember this chutney: spread it on your bun, as a modern, artisanal, change of pace from the usual store-bought ketchup.

May our tomatoes, with their intense taste, abundance of nutrition, and their bright red color, make your festive season very, very, delicious! Merry Holidays and a Happy, Healthy New Year to you!

Spiced Christmas Tomato-Cranberry Chutney



- 1 Red Onion, finely diced
- 1/2 cup of Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 can of Italian Plum Tomatoes (around 28 oz)
- 1/4 cup Maple Syrup
- 1 cup water
- 1 Vanilla Bean, sliced open and seeds scraped
- 1 Star Anise
- 1 Cinnamon Stick, about 4 inches long
- 1 can of Cranberry Sauce (14oz)
- 1/2 cup of dry cranberries
- 1 cup of Muscovado or medium dark brown sugar
- 1 whole fresh red Chili Pepper
- 1 fresh rosemary sprig and 1 fresh thyme sprig
- 1 tea spoon of powdered (ground) ginger or 2 teaspoons chopped fresh ginger

PREP TIME: **15 MINUTES**

COOKING TIME: **ABOUT 45 MINUTES**

MAKES: **32 fl oz**

In a medium saucepan, combine the onion with vinegar, maple syrup, water, vanilla bean and seeds, star anise, and cinnamon. Stir well, then cook over medium-low heat until the liquid is gently reduced by about a third and the onions are soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in the rest of the ingredients, then cook over a medium low heat, gently smashing the tomatoes into very small pieces without breaking the chili. Leaving the chili whole gives a light not too spicy heat; if you prefer it hotter, cut the chili into two or three pieces and crush it as desired, which will release its heat into the chutney. Simmer gently for about 45-50 minutes, stirring occasionally. Leave to cool, then transfer the mixture into a 32 oz sterilized glass jar. Letting it age in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours gives a better flavor and texture. Enjoy the chutney with a nice cheeseboard, or alongside a honey-glazed ham - also, lovely as a holiday homemade version of classic ketchup!
Note: This will keep for about 2 weeks; to keep it longer you can either freeze it in smaller portions or process the jar/s for canning.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS, TO YOU FROM US AS THE GREATEST TOMATOES FROM EUROPE!

Whatever you are celebrating this winter holiday--and we have so many festivals and reasons to celebrate-- no doubt you'll be indulging in lots of rich foods. Even if our gatherings and parties are smaller, our tables will still be laden with special dishes.

On Christmas Day itself, though, it's hard to decide exactly how to celebrate. If you are part of the religious festival, your observances and traditions are part of your life. But Christmas is also a national holiday and most businesses are closed. With no work, whatever your beliefs and observances, it is a day to gather and share with friends. And gifts? Who doesn't love gifts?

Here is a great gift suggestion: Tomatoes! Why not wrap up several beautiful tins of beautiful tomatoes as a gift? (You can put me on your gift list, too!). Or, since most tomato cans are beautiful to look at already, just wrap them in a ribbon and set them under the tree, or use them as stocking stuffers (though admittedly, probably not for the kids). So now, what to eat?

Only a month ago we celebrated Thanksgiving and likely ate our fill of turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, Brussels sprouts, candied sweet potatoes and a multitude of pies. You're probably still feeling full. Really: a month is not long enough to work up an appetite for the same feast. We need a different celebration dish, a joyous celebration dish, a sizzling, aromatic, irresistible celebration dish that can lure even the most jaded holiday season appetite. We need a dish that makes people happy and brings us together: Lasagna!

Why not celebrate Christmas with a big tray of bubbling, tomato-rich, savory lasagna!! A vegetarian lasagna to be precise: layers of seasonal vegetables, (pumpkin/winter squash), tender pasta, creamy ricotta, all awash with our beautiful super-tasty tomatoes. Who knows, perhaps it will become your own family's Christmas tradition? (It has in ours).



Tomato and Roast Pumpkin Squash Lasagna

Serves about 8 as a main course, though it will serve more as one of many dishes on the festive table

1 (21 oz) bag pre-cut sliced Butternut Squash (or peel and slice your own--any squash such as hubbard, kabocha, butternut, etc. Hint: they are easier to peel if roasted first) salt and pepper, to taste
4-5 tablespoons olive oil, or as needed about 24 oz uncooked lasagna pasta sheets, or 3 lbs fresh
a large pinch or two of dried oregano leaves, crushed through your fingers as you add it into the sauce
1-2 cloves garlic, lightly crushed/smashed
1 small onion, chopped
1 28-oz can whole peeled

or diced tomatoes, or San Marzano DOP tomatoes, plus the juices
1 can (15 oz) pureed tomatoes (passata)
2-3 tablespoons tomato paste
2 cups whole milk ricotta cheese
2 cups shredded white meltable cheese such as mozzarella
1/2 bunch/1 small bunch/ or a handful chopped fresh basil--if fresh isn't available, substitute parsley; do not use dried basil
1/2 cup freshly grated/shredded Parmesan or pecorino cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Roast the pumpkin: Toss the pumpkin squash slices with a drizzle of olive oil, a sprinkling of salt and pepper, and a generous crumbling of dried oregano leaves. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until just tender and lightly browned in places. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.

Make the tomato sauce: Heat about 2 tbsp of the olive oil with the garlic; when the garlic sizzles and turns golden, and smells lovely, add the onion and half the basil, cook together until the onion is softened. Pour in the canned tomatoes and their juices as well as the tomato passata; lower the heat to a simmer, and squish the tomatoes so that they break up as they cook. This should take about 20-30 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper; stir in the tomato paste. Using a blender or an immersion blender, puree the mixture. If it seems too thin, return to heat, and cook a few minutes to thicken; in addition, you could add a little more tomato paste. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Precook the lasagna sheets if using dry: boil until very al dente, then drain, rinse in cold water, and lay out on an oiled tray with a little bit of olive oil to keep them from sticking. If using fresh pasta sheets they do not require pre-cooking before layering them into the lasagna).

Assemble the Lasagna: Drizzle 1 tbsp of olive oil in a large baking pan, about 14x10 inches and about 6 inches deep.

Ladle several tablespoons of sauce over the bottom of dish and spread evenly. Top with a layer of lasagna pasta sheets, then a layer of roasted squash and a little more sauce, a sprinkling of Parmesan or pecorino. Make another layer of lasagna, and add more sauce, dabs of ricotta and a handful of mozzarella, then another of lasagna. Keep repeating and end with a generous layering of tomato sauce and cheese on top. Drizzle with olive oil, and bake for 45-50 minutes, until the squash is tender, the cheese melted, and it smells delicious.

Remove from the oven; let it sit, covered lightly with foil, for about 10 minutes before serving. Serve sprinkled with the remaining fresh basil (or parsley).

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