



SEEDS AS FOOD

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of grains and legumes in the life of our species. They and the nuts are seeds: compact, desiccated packages that contain a plant's embryonic offspring, together with enough food for them to develop their roots and leaves and become self-sufficient. Because they are a concentrated source of protein and either carbohydrates or fats, and can easily be stored for long periods of time, the edible seeds have played a crucial role in human nutrition and cultural evolution. The turning point in the latter came about 10,000 years ago with the rise of agriculture and the selective propagation of food crops, and cereals and legumes were the first plants to be brought in some measure under human control. As the nomadic life of the hunter-gatherer gave way to settlements associated with large grain fields, centralization of the food supply and population brought the need for greater social organization, for planning and record keeping. The earliest known writing, alphabets, and arithmetical systems, dating from about 3000 B.C., are devoted to grain transactions. The culture of the fields made possible the culture of the mind.

Although it is less obvious to us than it would have been to our distant ancestors, cereals have continued to be the essential food of the human race. Today, they provide the bulk of the caloric intake for much of the world's population: around 70% for Egypt and India, and near 80% in China, or between 2 and 3 times the average for the developed West. The cereals and legumes put together account for more than two thirds of the world's dietary protein. Even the industrial countries are fed indirectly by the huge amounts of corn, wheat, and soybeans on which their cattle, hogs, and chickens are

raised. When we learn that the cereals are members of the grass family, we find new significance in the Old Testament prophet Isaiah's admonition: "All flesh is grass."

Seeds are much more convenient than meat, milk, eggs, and other sources of protein that are quick to spoil. But they have an important drawback: unlike meat, milk, or eggs, any particular kind of seed is usually an incomplete protein source for animals, because it is deficient in one or more of the essential amino acids. Over the millennia, however, widely separated cultures have learned to combine different seeds in their diet so as to balance their protein intake. For example, the Asian diet of rice and soybeans and the Central American diet of corn and common beans have been traditional for many centuries. Today we know that the cereals are deficient mainly in lysine, the legumes in sulfur-containing amino acids; but when the two foods are blended together, these deficiencies are canceled out.

Recipes and food
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Curatorial Approach Marathon
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combine the polenta, semolina, pastry flour, cumin, pepper flakes and cilantro with 3 cups of water in a mixing bowl; mix well, cover and set aside for at least 2 hours or overnight. When you are ready to make the dosa, add enough of the remaining water to make a pourable, thinish, crepe like batter, stir in the salt, soda and 1/2 Tb of the oil, heat a non-stick omelet pans or griddles over medium heat. Stir the batter between each use. to make each dosa, scoop out 1/2 cup of batter and pour it over the bottom of a pan. lift and tilt the pan so the batter flows to make a 20cm crepe. cook until the edges begin to curl and the bottom turns golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. flip over and cook on the second side. stack the dosas, brown side down to keep warm.

dosa
1 cup polenta
1 cup semolina
1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
1/2 Tb crushed red pepper flakes
3 Tb chopped cilantro
1 cup yogurt
3 to 3 1/2 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
pinch of baking soda (natron)
unrefined corn oil for cooking

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curried aubergine and spinach
serves 6

3 medium aubergine
70g chickpea flour
1 teaspoon turmeric
2 tablespoons garam masala
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
2-3 tablespoons ghee or sunflower oil
1/2 cup water
1 1/2 tablespoons brown mustard seeds
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
1-3 hot green chillies, minced
1/2 teaspoon cardamom seeds, crushed
1 kg tomatoes, seeded and coarsely chopped
600g spinach, trimmed and chopped

preheat the oven to 220°C. peel and cut the aubergine into smallish cubes, then combine with the chickpea flour, turmeric, 1 Tb of the garam masala, salt and half of the ghee or oil in a bowl. pour in the water, toss to mix, then spread the aubergine into a single layer on two baking sheets and roast them until they are browned and tender. set aside. heat the remaining oil in a large skillet over medium heat. add the mustard seeds and fry until they pop. add the ginger, chillies, cardamom, and tomatoes and stir-fry until the tomatoes are somewhat pulpy; stir in the aubergine, cook a bit longer and season with salt if needed. close to serving time, add the spinach, cover and cook until the spinach is bright green and softened.

dal
for 6 people

400g dried split chana dal or
yellow split peas
2 1/2 liters water
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
2 tablespoons ghee or sunflower oil
1/2 tablespoons brown mustard seeds
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
3 tablespoons shredded coconut
zest and juice of 1 lemon or lime
1 tablespoon salt, or to taste
1/2 cup chopped cilantro or parsley

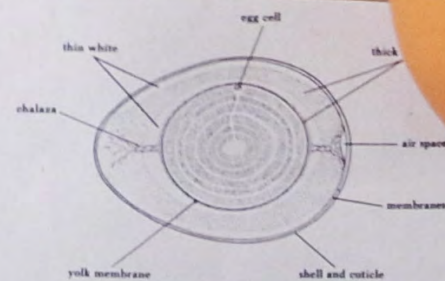


rinse the dal under running water, drain and place it in a large soup pot. add the water and bring to a boil. skim off the foam that collects on the surface. add the turmeric, ginger, cayenne and 1 teaspoon of the ghee or oil. reduce the heat and gently boil, almost covered, until the dal is very soft, about 1 hour. whisk or blend the soup until it is creamy. about 5 minutes before serving, warm remaining ghee or oil in a small pot over medium heat. add the mustard seeds and when they begin to pop, drop in the cumin seeds. when they have slightly browned, pour the seasoning into the soup and add the coconut, citrus zest and juice and salt. bring the dal to a gentle boil and stir in the cilantro.

meringue

3 large egg whites
175g caster sugar

preheat the oven to 150c
use a large, grease free bowl and in it, whisk or beat the egg whites until they form semi stiff peaks. Now beat in a quarter of the sugar at a time until it is all incorporated. Be sure not to over beat the eggs, as they might collapse or curdle. if this happens, start over from the beginning. drop the meringue by dessertspoonsfull onto the baking tray and bake for 45.



The structure of the egg. Layering of color in the yolk is caused by the hen's periodic ingestion of grain and its pigments. As the yolk grows, the egg cell moves from center to surface, where it can be fertilized easily.



Recipes and food
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carrot cake
serves 8

4 eggs
225g caster sugar
300ml sunflower oil
9 medium carrots, finely grated
300g plain flour, sifted
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 rounded teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (natron)
1/2 teaspoon salt
150g finely chopped walnuts
for the icing
125g unsalted butter, softened
250g cream cheese, softened
1/2 teaspoon natural vanilla extract
50-75g icing sugar

preheat the oven to 180c
butter a 23cm cake tin and line its base with baking paper.
beat the eggs and caster sugar until they are light and fluffy.
pour in the oil and beat for a few more minutes. fold in the
carrots and then the flour with the cinnamon, baking powder
and soda and salt. finally fold in the walnuts. pour the mix-
ture into the prepared tin and bake for about 45min or until
knife inserted in the centre comes out clean. remove from
the oven and cool the cake in the tin before taking it out. to
make the icing, beat the butter with the cream cheese for
a few minutes until the mixture is smooth. add the vanilla
extract and icing sugar. when the cake is cool, ice the top
with the icing.

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focaccia
for 6

2 teaspoons granular dried yeast
225ml warm water
400g plain flour
maldon salt and freshly ground
black pepper
extra virgin olive oil

mix the yeast with the warm water in a bowl, and allow to
rest for about 5 min.
put the flour and 1 teaspoon salt into the food processor.
add the yeast and 2 Tb
of the olive oil. pulse until a dough forms. if necessary
add more flour. the dough should be smooth but not sticky.
transfer to a clean surface and knead the dough for a few
minutes. shape into a ball and place in a bowl greased with
olive oil. cover with a cloth and leave to rise in a warm place
for about 45min.
punch the dough down with your fists to deflate it. working
in the bowl, knead the
dough four or five times. cover and allow to rise again in the
warm place for a further
half hour.
preheat the oven to 225c
roll out the dough to a 1cm thickness and set in the baking
tray. poke small indentations
into the dough with your finger, lightly brush or drizzle with
olive oil, and sprinkle with salt,
pepper and fresh herbs. bake 10 minutes.

pumpkin potato croquettes
for approx. 16 pieces

300g hokaido pumpkin
100g mashing potatoes
1 large onion, minced
a pinch of nutmeg
salt and pepper to taste

100g flour
100g bread crumbs
1egg, whisked
1 tb sesame seeds

cut the pumpkin in half, take out the seeds, and bake at
200c for about 20 minutes, or until soft. make into a puree.
while the potatoes are boiling, saute the onions until golden
brown. peel the potatoes and mash with the pumpkin while
they are still hot. add a pinch of nutmeg and salt and pepper
to taste. form into 5cm balls. set up a dipping station in the
order of flour, egg, and bread crumb/sesame mix. heat the
oil to 180c. when you drop bread crumbs into the oil, they
will immediately float to the top. roll each ball into the flour,
egg, then bread crumb sesame. put into the oil and cook,
gently turning them with a slotted spoon, so that both sides
are equally fox color orange.

salsa verde
for 6

2 large bunches finely chopped italian
or curly parsley
2 garlic cloves, very finely minced
1 to 2 Tb capers, rinsed and chopped
180ml virgin olive oil
65ml red wine vinegar, champagne
vinegar or lemon juice
salt and pepper to taste

combine the parsley, garlic, capers, and olive oil in a bowl
and stir in vinegar or lemon juice to taste. season with salt.
chervil, basil, dill, fennel greens (and the crushed seeds)
can also be used to soften the flavor. To thicken the sauce,
include the yolk of hard-cooked egg, first mashed with the
garlic and capers.

