



your

... It's Worth the Trip!



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Cuban Style Red Beans and Rice - One Skillet

Generally, for most Americans, a completely plant-based diet can meet nourishment needs while also allowing them to perform optimally. The only nutrient that is of concern is vitamin B-12; but most people would have to be true vegans for years in order to deplete their body's stores of this nutrient. Unlike what many may believe, being able to consume enough protein with a diet void of animal products is not an issue on a plant-based diet. In fact, at a level of 0.8-1 gram/pound of body weight, the amount to support the highly active and most athletes, protein needs can still be met on a plant-based diet. This is because plant foods such as grains, legumes, vegetables, soy, nuts and seeds, etc. all have protein. Legumes, nuts and seeds, and some grains contain as much as 8-15 grams per serving. In order to meet needs, the key is to eat a variety of plant-based foods throughout the day, while aiming to be sure to have 1-2 servings of items that provide a higher amount of protein, such as legumes and quinoa.



Many people in the world do not use meat as the main course of a meal, just a small accompaniment for flavoring. When meat is the center piece of a meal, it usually is due to a celebration. Generally, Americans are not protein malnourished. We typically consume more animal products than needed. The portion sizes for meat tend to be more than the recommended 3 oz. portion. Our entrées often not only include meat, but then are topped with cheese. This isn't to say we shouldn't eat meats and cheeses in our entrées, but these type of meals don't need to be the norm. When too much protein from animal sources is consumed, the amount of saturated fat may be too high, along with perhaps unnecessary calories. Both of which can lead to poor health outcomes, such as heart disease and or excessive body fat. There is no need to banish animal products from the diet.

A great way to up the nutrition quality of your diet is to consider increasing the number of plant-based meals in your menu. Plant-based foods offer fiber, key vitamins and minerals, and phytonutrients, that are not typically found in animal-based foods. As we all know, most Americans don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. Meatless meals comprised of plant foods is a great way to assist with meeting intake recommendations for fruits and vegetables. No need to fear about not meeting your nutritional needs by forgoing animal products at meals from time to time either. Consider having one meatless meal every couple of days. Try switching up a breakfast of eggs and bacon or cereal and milk, with a piece of avocado, whole wheat toast, or a peanut butter smoothie made with almond milk and bananas; or try for a day like "Meatless Monday."

Here is a great recipe to get you started. It can be modified to be animal product free. But if this isn't your thing, the portions of animal products are minimal, and are added really just for flavoring. You can even double the batch for a quick reheated lunch, or freeze some for a family meal the following week.

Ingredients: 4 servings

- 2 tbsp. olive or canola oil
- 1 cup onion, chopped (1 medium yellow or white onion)
- ½ of a medium bell pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 cup instant uncooked brown rice
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. cumin powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 32-36 oz. low sodium broth (beef, chicken, or vegetable)
- 24 oz. of canned low sodium kidney beans, drained and rinsed (about two 14 oz. cans)
- 3 slices of turkey bacon
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Add oil to a large sauce pan or Dutch oven and bring to temperature over medium-high heat. Add the chopped onions and bell peppers and sauté for about five minutes or until the onion is tender.
2. Push the peppers and onions to the side of the pan and add the minced garlic to the center of the pan. While tossing constantly, sauté the garlic just until it begins to brown (about 1 minute). Mix it in with the peppers and onions.
3. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly for about another minute. Add the instant rice, herbs and spices and cook for an additional two minutes, stirring constantly and being careful the rice doesn't burn.
4. Add the broth and bay leaf, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for about 10-15 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent the mixture from sticking, then cover quickly. If more broth is needed, add it ¼ cup at a time.
5. While the rice is cooking, cook the turkey bacon by placing a paper towel on a microwavable plate and place three slices of turkey in a single layer, without touching each other on the plate. Cover with a paper towel and microwave until crisp for approximately 2-3 minutes. Remove the plate carefully from the microwave (it will be hot). Break the turkey bacon into small pieces and sprinkle it into the rice mixture. Cover and continue cooking for the remaining time, or until the rice is tender and liquid is absorbed.
6. Serve ¼ of the rice and beans on a plate. Top with 1 oz. of shredded cheddar cheese.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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