



VEGAN FOR THE HOLIDAYS

CELEBRATION FEASTS
for THANKSGIVING
through NEW YEAR'S DAY

ZEL ALLEN

HOLIDAYS INSPIRE EVERYONE TO COOK, EVEN PEOPLE WHO RARELY STEP INTO THE KITCHEN.

Who doesn't look forward to special festive meals when joining with friends and family to celebrate?

Vegan cooking expert Zel Allen demonstrates that plant-based holiday foods are as delicious, innovative, and elegant as their hallowed meat-based counterparts. Taking readers on a tour of winter holidays, Zel provides a banquet of recipes for irresistible dishes steeped in heritage and tradition, innovatively updated with novel touches.

Vegan for the Holidays covers all the details any holiday cook requires to create the perfect celebration. From assembling a party menu to planning a multicourse feast, you'll get ideas for establishing modern, more healthful food traditions with a compassionate focus that your guests can enjoy with guilt-free gusto.



"Zel's imaginative recipes bring elegance and flavor to the festive table. *Vegan for the Holidays*, with its delicious creations all garnished to the max, makes Thanksgiving through New Year's joyfully memorable. This is the go-to holiday cookbook not only for savvy vegans, but also for everyone with a desire to eat healthier."

— **Rory Freedman**, author of *Skinny Bitch*, *Skinny Bitch in the Kitch*, and *Skinny Bastard*

"Fabulously festive, Zel's recipes add a pleasant and surprisingly broad array of flavors and creativity to the typical holiday fare. With her intensive attention to detail and healthy decadence, she will enrich your celebrations with this plethora of delicious and highly nutritious possibilities!"

— **Julieanna Hever**, MS, RD, CPT; author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Plant-Based Nutrition*

"As a longtime fan of vegan celebration occasions, I just adore Zel's brilliant focus on the winter holidays. With *Vegan for the Holidays*, you'll have years' worth of inspiring recipes right at hand, all in her warm and inviting style."

— **Nava Atlas**, author of *Vegan Holiday Kitchen* and *Wild About Greens*

"An exceptional banquet of cholesterol-free, whole-foods vegan dishes created for grand dining during the holiday season makes this an outstanding cookbook everyone can appreciate."

— **Hans Diehl**, DrHSc, MPH, FACN; clinical director, Lifestyle Medicine Institute, Loma Linda, CA; author of *Health Power: Healthy by Choice, Not by Chance*

"*Vegan for the Holidays* is a treasure-trove of creative, delicious, and seasonal recipes. With this book in hand, there's no reason to hesitate to invite even the most confirmed meat eaters for holiday feasts."

— **Reed Mangels**, PhD, RD; nutrition editor, *Vegetarian Journal*; co-author of *Simply Vegan* and *Vegan & Vegetarian FAQ*.

Zel Allen partners with her husband Reuben to publish *Vegetarians in Paradise*, a popular online vegetarian magazine that spotlights Zel's humorous illustrations and innovative recipes. She is also author of *The Nut Gourmet* cookbook and has contributed travel and food articles in *Vegetarian Journal*.

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Introduction

WITH AN IDEA SIMMERING IN THE BACK OF MY MIND FOR SOME TIME NOW, I feel this is the right time to bring it to a boil, finish it off, plate it, garnish the platter, and present it at the holiday table. Braising, roasting, and sautéing in my kitchen is an abundant crop of indulgent recipes harvested just for the holidays. While many of us take pleasure in cooking throughout the year, we know the holiday season is that special time when those who seldom cook a meal from scratch will haul out the chopping block, mash some potatoes, and consult the family about vegetable preferences.

These past four years, I've poked a spatula into every nook and cranny of my kitchen, gleaning ideas to infuse plenty of spice into those special festive meals when people come together with friends and family to celebrate the holidays.

My aim is to offer vegan holiday foods that are just as delicious, innovative, and elegant as their hallowed meat-based counterparts. Holiday dishes for the festive vegan table center on fresh foods harvested from nature and prepared from scratch and are far more healthful and lower in saturated fat than traditional fare.

Because my family and I share the holidays with friends and other family members who are not vegan or who may have only rarely tasted festive dishes without animal ingredients, I want to provide celebration foods anyone would be proud to serve. And because the eyes are the first to experience the feast, I unleash the usual boundaries and think extravagantly: A holiday meal doesn't have to cost more; it simply has to look that way. Imagine the praise when serving a lavish-looking dish that makes everyone inhale audibly and exclaim with sounds of delight.

Fresh from the oven to the Thanksgiving table are some delectable, hearty, and innovative entrées, such as the picturesque, voluptuous wild rice, vegetable and nut-filled Thanksgiving Phyllo Pie, along with a lavish feast of cranberry appetizers, side dishes, and even beverages.

For Thanksgiving, I'd originally planned to include a recipe for mashed potatoes, but then I shed that idea because most people already know how to prepare them. Then I had second thoughts and included it with the Thanksgiving side dishes we simply cannot leave behind. To offer a truly memorable stuffing,

I prepared a pot of wild rice, combined it with shiitake mushrooms, pecans, and the perfect balance of seasonings to bring a bountiful bowl of Savory Sourdough and Wild Rice Stuffing to the table.

Dessert is that richly spiced old standby, Williamsburg “Pumpkin” Pie, along with Apples ’n’ Cream Pie. Fondly, we can join together to raise cups of silky smooth Pumpkin-Apple Nog to end the meal with a toast.

While some choose to celebrate Christmas with simple, everyday comfort foods, I’ve adopted the philosophy that celebration foods ought to stand apart from our day-to-day fare. Holidays are distinguished from ordinary days and beg for foods infused with novel touches, such as Pear and Butternut Bisque with Cranberry-Pear Compote. I still bring the leafy greens to the table but with dazzling touches like those featured in the Spinach Salad with Beets and Pomegranates, brazenly decked out in bold Christmas colors and served with a knockout Cranberry-Pomegranate Dressing.

Jewish holidays are emphatically centered on food, and Hanukkah is no exception. I couldn’t resist stirring up a kettle of Sweet and Sour Cabbage Borscht, a time-honored Eastern European soup that makes a delicious starter. To accompany the traditional Potato Latkes with Tofu Sour Cream and Applesauce, I’ve included Carrot and Sweet Potato Tzimmes. Another memorable sweet, the Cranberry Apple Strudel, is still the revered, old-fashioned dessert from Eastern Europe made even more irresistible by its twenty-first century makeover.

Kwanzaa, a recently created holiday, honors the ancient roots of the African-American culture and celebrates the weeklong holiday with special rituals and symbolic items. Eventually, each day’s special ritual leads everyone to the table for a delicious meal. I hope you’ll take part in exploring the traditional African-American foods such as Sweet Potato Pie with Cashew-Ginger Crème, Southern Cornbread, Mustard Greens with Tempeh Bacon, and a host of delicious pumpkin dishes.

I feel grateful for the rich bounty sown and harvested by our American farmers, who have enabled us to celebrate with an abundance of fresh foods.

Whether I've thrown a New Year's Eve bash with a lavish spread of great-tasting finger foods or welcomed in the new year with an open-house, soup-and-chili party, I always find the guests mingling at the table and sampling everything edible. And if, by chance, they leave the table briefly to chat with a friend, I see them returning to taste one more tidbit of New Year Log in Spicy Pecan Gremolata or dip their spoons into the thick and creamy Sweet Potato Soup.

So, I would like to welcome you to a season of jubilant celebrations, complete with irresistible vegan dishes that reflect the beautiful bounty of harvest foods—the creamy squash and pumpkins, tart cranberries, sweet persimmons, juicy pomegranates, freshly cooked chestnuts, crunchy nuts, earthy wild rice, and the herbs and spices that are inseparable from the season. In the pages of this volume, you'll find a banquet of irresistible heritage dishes—some dating back to earlier centuries—innovatively updated with novel touches.

While my focus has been solely on the foods that grace the holiday table, I'm fully aware the holidays came about to mark meaningful events of historical or religious nature. But, after all the hustle and bustle of party planning, gift shopping, gift wrapping, addressing cards, and attending holiday rituals and ceremonies, it all boils down to gathering with friends and loved ones and enjoying a fabulous meal of simple comfort foods or elegant gourmet creations. Food, after all, is a powerful bonding agent that seals warm memories of cherished occasions.

My hope is to bring grace and elegance to the table and establish new holiday food traditions with a compassionate focus that vegans can enjoy with guilt-free gusto.

As I sit down to plan my own family holiday dinners, I feel grateful for the rich bounty sown and harvested by our American farmers, who have enabled us to celebrate with an abundance of fresh foods. And it gives me deep pleasure to invite you to join me in the kitchen throughout the season, as together we participate in fun celebrations and conclude each event with a darned good meal. And now, let's bring on the holiday feasts!

Butternut Squash, Beet, and Apple Soup Makes 8 to 10 cups; 5 to 6 servings

A small cup of this soup makes a tasty starter to a festive meal, while a hearty bowl will satisfy for a light meal during the busy holiday season.

SEE PHOTO FACING PAGE 26

**1 butternut squash
(1½ to 2 pounds), peeled**

2 small beets, peeled

3½ cups water

1 large onion, chopped

1 large carrot, diced

2 stalks celery, chopped

1½ cups apple juice

**2 apples, peeled, cored, and
coarsely shredded**

½ teaspoon salt

Garnishes

Pinch ground nutmeg

1½ cups corn kernels

½ cup sweetened dried cranberries

- 1.** Cut the squash and the beets into ½-inch cubes and put them in an 8- to 10-quart stockpot with 3 cups of the water. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Decrease the heat to medium and simmer for about 25 minutes, or until the squash and beets are tender.
- 2.** Meanwhile, in a large skillet over medium heat, cook and stir the onion, carrot, celery and the remaining ½ cup water for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are very soft and beginning to brown. Add 1 or more tablespoons of water as needed to prevent burning.
- 3.** Add the onion mixture and the apple juice to the stockpot with the squash and the beets. Use an immersion blender to process the soup in the stockpot, or put the soup in a blender in batches. Process until the soup is smooth or slightly chunky, as desired, stopping occasionally to scrape down the blender jar. Return the soup to the stockpot.
- 4.** Add the shredded apples and salt and mix well. Cook the soup until simmering.
- 5.** Ladle the soup into bowls. Garnish each serving with a pinch of nutmeg, 2 tablespoons of corn, and a few dried cranberries if desired.

Thanksgiving Phyllo Pie

Makes 10 to 12 servings

Stately, delicious, and aromatic, this is the dish that will change the minds of those who snicker at the thought of a vegan Thanksgiving dinner. Prepare the filling a day in advance. SEE PHOTO FACING PAGE 26

Filling

3¾ cups water

¾ cup wild rice

½ cup pearl barley

2½ teaspoons salt

⅓ cup whole almonds, coarsely chopped

⅓ cup walnuts, coarsely chopped

⅓ cup pecans, coarsely chopped

2 small russet potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-sized chunks

8 ounces shiitake mushrooms, stems discarded, chopped

1 large onion, chopped

1 large red bell pepper, chopped

2 large carrots, coarsely shredded

2 stalks celery, diced

5 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon dried sage

¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¾ teaspoon ground allspice

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon dried marjoram

½ teaspoon dried rosemary

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. To make the filling, combine 3½ of the water, rice, barley, and 1¼ teaspoons of the salt in a 3-quart saucepan. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Decrease the heat to low and cook for 50 to 60 minutes, or until the rice and barley are tender and all the liquid has been absorbed.
3. Meanwhile, place the almonds, walnuts, and pecans in a single layer on a 17½ x 12½-inch rimmed baking sheet. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until lightly toasted. Immediately pour the nuts onto a plate to cool.
4. Put the potatoes in a 1-quart saucepan with water to cover. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Decrease the heat to medium and simmer 5 to 7 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Transfer the potatoes to a medium bowl with a slotted spoon and mash them.
5. Cook and stir the mushrooms, onion, bell pepper, carrots, celery, garlic, sage, cinnamon, allspice, thyme, marjoram, rosemary, and the remaining ¼ cup water in a deep, 10 or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are softened and beginning to brown. Add 1 or more tablespoons of water as needed to prevent burning.
6. Add the tomatoes, zucchini, raisins, chickpeas, the remaining 1¼ teaspoons of salt, and pepper to the skillet. Cook another 10 minutes, or until the tomatoes are broken down.
7. Add the rice mixture, toasted nuts, and mashed potatoes to the skillet and mix thoroughly. Adjust the seasonings and set aside.



Old Saint Nick's Wicked Walnut Cookies

Makes 4½ dozen

With a generous measure of creamy puréed walnuts, these delicious cookies offer melt-in-the-mouth soft centers and delightfully crunchy outsides.

2 cups raw walnuts

3 cups whole wheat pastry flour

1¼ cups organic sugar

1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats

½ cup raisins

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

**1 cup mashed bananas
(about 2 large)**

⅔ cup vegan margarine

**1¼ teaspoons black walnut extract,
maple extract, almond extract, or
another 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ cup water

**2 tablespoons flaxseeds or
ground flaxseeds**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line two 17½ x 12½-inch rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.
- 2.** Chop ½ cup of the walnuts into small pieces and set aside. Combine the flour, sugar, oats, raisins, baking powder, baking soda, and cinnamon in a large bowl and mix well. Make sure the raisins are well coated with flour to prevent them from sinking to the bottom of the batter. Set aside.
- 3.** Put the remaining 1½ cups of walnuts in a food processor. Process until they become a creamy walnut butter, stopping occasionally to scrape down the work bowl. Add the bananas, vegan margarine, black walnut extract, and vanilla extract and process until smooth and creamy, stopping occasionally to scrape down the work bowl.
- 4.** Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and mix well. The dough will become quite stiff.
- 5.** Pour the water and flaxseeds in a blender. Process on high speed for 1 to 2 minutes to form a thick slurry. Stir the slurry into the dough, mixing thoroughly to distribute it evenly.
- 6.** Roll teaspoonfuls of dough into 1-inch balls and place them 1½ inches apart on the prepared baking sheet. Flatten them slightly with your hands or the bottom of a glass and press a piece of the reserved chopped walnuts into the center of each cookie.
- 7.** Bake for 14 to 18 minutes or until the cookies are lightly browned on the bottom. If the cookies on the top rack need browning, move them to the bottom rack for another 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer the cookies to a cooling rack or plate and let cool completely.

Apple and Bacon Morsels

Makes 12 servings

1 large crisp apple

**1 (7-ounce) package tempeh bacon,
cut into twelve 1-inch strips**

12 walnut halves

Cut the apple crosswise into six slices; cut the slices in half, discarding seeds. Place a piece of tempeh bacon on each apple slice and place a walnut half on top. Arrange them on a platter.

Red-Robed kalamatas SEE PHOTO FACING PAGE 91

Makes 12 servings

12 pitted kalamata olives

**4 pitted dates, each cut lengthwise
into thirds**

**1 large roasted red bell pepper,
sliced into 12 strips**

Toothpicks

Hold an olive and a date piece together. Wrap a strip of roasted pepper around them and secure with a toothpick. Arrange them on a platter.

Sweet Potato Puffs

Makes 24 puffs; 10 to 12 servings

You'll be tempted to call these mini muffins the cutest little appetizers you've ever seen, and you'll be absolutely right. These savory pixie puffs have two attributes—eye appeal and irresistible flavor. SEE PHOTO BETWEEN PAGES 90–91

12 ounces sweet potatoes or yams, peeled and cut into bite-sized chunks

½ cup vanilla soy milk

1½ teaspoons rice vinegar or white vinegar

1¼ cups almonds

1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats

1¼ teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground pepper

½ teaspoon garlic powder

¼ teaspoon ground cardamom (optional)

½ cup well-mashed firm tofu (about 5 ounces)

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Place two mini muffin pans on a 17½ x 12½-inch rimmed baking sheet and set aside.
- 2.** Bring the sweet potatoes to a boil in a covered 2-quart saucepan with enough water to cover the potatoes. Decrease the heat to medium and simmer for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the sweet potatoes are fork-tender.
- 3.** Meanwhile, combine the soy milk and vinegar in a small bowl and set aside to sour.
- 4.** Put the almonds in a food processor. Process until coarsely ground. Transfer them to a large bowl and add the oats, salt, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, pepper, garlic powder, and optional cardamom. Mix well.
- 5.** Drain the sweet potatoes and put them in the food processor with the tofu. Process until smooth and creamy, stopping occasionally to scrape down the work bowl. Transfer the sweet potato mixture to a medium bowl, add the soured soy milk and oil, and mix well.
- 6.** Put the water and flaxseeds in a blender. Process on high speed for 1 to 2 minutes to form a thick slurry. Add the slurry to the sweet potato mixture and mix well. Add the sweet potato mixture to the dry ingredients and mix thoroughly to form a soft dough.

Tempeh Bacon-Stuffed Mushrooms

Makes 4 to 5 servings

These flavorful mushrooms with their heaping hickory-seasoned stuffing do a great job of setting the scene for the delectable meal ahead. Assemble them a day in advance and serve them chilled or warm. SEE PHOTO BETWEEN PAGES 90-91

**8 large button mushrooms
(2 to 2½ inches in diameter)**

2 cups water

2 tablespoons tamari

⅓ cup coarsely chopped cashews

6 strips tempeh bacon

⅔ cup finely diced tomatoes

4 green onions, minced

**1 slice whole wheat bread,
cut into ⅛-inch cubes**

**1 tablespoon freshly squeezed
lemon juice**

¼ teaspoon liquid smoke

Pinch cayenne

Salt

Freshly ground pepper

Lettuce leaves

**8 thin strips yellow or orange
bell pepper, for garnish**

- 1.** Remove the stems from the mushrooms. Save them for another use. Line a plate with a double layer of paper towels and set aside.
- 2.** Pour the water and tamari in a large, deep skillet and bring to a boil over high heat. Add the mushroom caps and boil 3 to 5 minutes, turning the mushrooms halfway through. Drain the mushrooms on several layers of paper towels and set aside.
- 3.** To make the stuffing, put the cashews in a food processor. Process until they are ground into a fine powdery meal. Transfer the cashew meal to a medium bowl.
- 4.** Add the tempeh bacon, tomatoes, onions, bread, lemon juice, liquid smoke, cayenne, and salt and pepper to taste, and combine until the mixture is moist and the ingredients are distributed evenly.
- 5.** Spoon a generous portion of the stuffing into each mushroom cap. Line a serving dish with lettuce leaves and arrange the stuffed mushrooms on the lettuce. Garnish each mushroom with a strip of yellow or orange bell pepper if desired.

