

TURKEY

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And here is the weird part: It tasted delicious. Seriously, it was amazing. Maybe it was all the cheese (the manicotti are stuffed with cheese; the ground turkey and sauce go on top). Maybe it was the balance of flavors. Maybe it was my homemade tomato sauce. But this is definitely a dish to feed your family or dazzle your friends at potluck dinners.

The same can be said of my next dish, Tamale Pie. This is a dish that takes all the best parts of a tamale, ditches the corn husks, and makes it into a casserole. Martha Stewart, whose recipe I used, calls it "the official casserole of Texas."

That may or may not be — I lived in Texas and don't remember eating it, but then again I don't remember not eating it, either. If Texas doesn't want to claim it, maybe some other state will, because it is outstanding.

Think of it as a casserole sandwich. The top and bottom layers are made from cornmeal, with the top embellished with browned Monterey Jack cheese. In between is a heavenly melange of Southwestern flavors — ground turkey, of course, plus tomatoes, onion, garlic, cumin, oregano, cayenne and more.

If you have ribs, it will stick to them.

And last, but far, far from least, I looked toward India and made Turkey-Spinach Korma. It is a curry with turkey and spinach, flavored with garlic, ginger, cilantro and onion, and enhanced and enriched with yogurt.

It is a fresh, bright and unexpected take on ground turkey, and about as far from a turkey burger as you can get.

DAN'S TURKEY MESS

Yield: 3 to 4 servings

- 1 teaspoon oil or butter (more if not using nonstick pan)
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 pound ground turkey
- Salt and pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- Pinch cayenne pepper, or to taste, optional
- 1 (15-ounce) can beans: black, pinto, kidney or cannellini
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, preferably fire-roasted
- White rice, for serving

1. Heat oil or butter or oil in a large nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Ground turkey-spinach korma.

onions and saute until translucent, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, 30 seconds to 1 minute.

2. Add ground turkey and season with plenty of salt and pepper. Add oregano and cayenne pepper, if using. Cook, breaking up turkey with a wooden spoon, until turkey is all cooked and there is no pink left. Add undrained beans and undrained tomatoes, stir to mix and cook until heated through.

3. Remove garlic if you can find it. Serve with plenty of rice. Leftovers, topped with a poached egg, are good for breakfast.

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

THREE-CHEESE TURKEY MANICOTTI

Yield: 4 servings

- 8 uncooked manicotti shells
- 1 pound ground turkey
- ½ large sweet onion, chopped
- 24 ounces tomato sauce, homemade or your favorite from a jar
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- ¼ cooking onion, chopped (or 1 teaspoon onion powder)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 cups shredded cheddar-Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 (15-ounce) carton ricotta cheese
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- 1 large egg, beaten

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 13-by-9-inch baking dish and set aside. Cook manicotti according to package directions.

2. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook turkey and chopped sweet onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in the spaghetti sauce, Italian seasoning, onion and garlic powder. Place 1 cup of this sauce in the prepared baking

dish.

3. Drain manicotti. In a large bowl, combine the cheddar-Monterey Jack cheese, ricotta cheese, ¼ cup of the Parmesan cheese and egg. Stuff into manicotti shells; this will be easiest if you use a pastry bag or a reusable plastic bag with a small hole cut out of one corner. Place shells over meat sauce. Top with remaining sauce. Sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup Parmesan cheese

4. Cover with aluminum foil and bake until bubbly, about 40 to 45 minutes.

— Adapted from a recipe in Taste of Home

TAMALE PIE

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

- 5½ cups water
- Salt and pepper
- 1¼ cups yellow cornmeal
- 1 tablespoon butter,

- plus more for dish
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 onion, coarsely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, ribs and seeds removed, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 1 serrano chile, finely chopped
- 1½ pounds ground turkey
- 1 (14-ounce) can plum tomatoes, coarsely chopped, juices reserved
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ¾ teaspoon ground oregano
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- 8 pimiento-stuffed green olives, rinsed and coarsely chopped
- 4 ounces (1¼ cups) grated Monterey Jack cheese
- Assorted garnishes for serving, such as crisp lettuce leaves, chopped avocado, tomatoes, red onion and cilantro

1. Bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add

2 teaspoons salt. Whisking constantly, add cornmeal in a slow, steady stream, switching to a wooden spoon if cornmeal becomes too thick to whisk. Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring often, until thick and creamy, about 15 minutes. Stir in butter; cover and keep warm.

2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter a 2-quart baking dish. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high, then add onion, garlic, bell pepper, chile and a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring often, until onion is golden and vegetables are tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Add turkey and cook, breaking up large pieces with a wooden spoon, until cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in tomatoes and juices, stock, cumin, oregano and cayenne. Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring, until most of the liquid has evaporated and the mixture resembles chili, about 10 minutes. Stir in olives and season with salt and pepper.

3. With a wet spatula, spread 1½ cups cornmeal into bottom of prepared dish. Spread turkey mixture on top, then spread remaining cornmeal on top. Sprinkle evenly with cheese. Bake until golden brown and cheese is melted, 35 to 40 minutes. Let stand 15 minutes. Serve with lettuce and garnishes.

— Recipe from "Martha's American Food," by Martha Stewart

TURKEY-SPINACH KORMA

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 large onion, chopped, divided
- 1 (2-inch) piece ginger, peeled

- and chopped (about ¼ cup)
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- ¾ cup plain low-fat yogurt, plus more for serving
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, see note
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for topping
- 3 cups cooked brown rice, for serving

Note: If ground turkey is 99% lean, use 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil.

1. Puree half of the onion, 2 tablespoons water, the ginger, garlic, curry powder and ½ teaspoon of the salt in a food processor or blender and set aside. Mix the yogurt with ¼ cup water in a small bowl and set aside.

2. Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add the remaining ½ chopped onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned and tender, about 3 minutes. Add the turkey and cook, breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned, about 3 minutes.

3. Add the onion-spice mixture to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until dry, about 4 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the spinach and the yogurt mixture. Cook, stirring, until warmed through, about 3 minutes. Stir in the cilantro and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Serve over rice with more yogurt and topped with cilantro.

— Adapted from the Food Network

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