

Museum Hours

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The eye is not drawn to one central activity or scene in these paintings, even though among them might be something deemed important, like the conversion of the apostle Paul or Jesus carrying his cross to Calvary. Those scenes take place in the midst of scores of ordinary scenes, and are accorded no more than ordinary significance. Something about this sequence helped me to let go of wondering about the film's destination and meaning.

The film itself is like a Bruegel painting, not telling you where to look or what to think in the way most films do. It ushered me into a sort of mindfulness. I felt a willingness arise in me to simply be present with the beauty, and the dinginess, and the cold, to listen to the quiet of the museum, to the sounds of the street, to the aching loveliness of Anne singing to her comatose cousin, to Johann remarking in German to a colleague.

I was happy to linger over junk and treasures in a street flea market, to wonder about a discarded doll or knick-knack, or a photo of a man carefully

posed but now anonymous.

Johann and Anne treat their friendship with care. His existence had grown a bit lonely before she arrived, yet they do not cling to or name their connection. When she prepares to leave the city at the film's end, they know it is time.

I sat watching the credits, as is my habit -- and suddenly I began to weep (not my habit during the credits). I felt as though emerging from an extended time of contemplative prayer. As with my richest meditation experiences, I emerged feeling open and deeply connected.

In the end, for me, writer-director Jem Cohen's brilliant, poetic film works as a kind of guided meditation, a lesson in mindfulness.

Museum Hours is playing through Thursday at Living Room Theaters, 341 S.W. 10th Ave. Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. You can find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.

FOOD

Black Bean and Sweet Potato Quesadillas

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup frozen corn
- 1 (19 ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 8 (8 inch) flour tortillas
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- cooking spray

Directions:

1. Place sweet potatoes into a large pot and cover with salted water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until very tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl. Mash sweet potatoes and mix in cilantro, chili powder, and salt.
2. Place corn in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high until warmed, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Spread 1/4 cup sweet potato mixture onto 1 tortilla; cover with 1/4 cup black beans and 1 tablespoon corn.



For a healthier diet try this delicious meatless alternative. Makes 4 servings

Sprinkle 1/4 cup Cheddar cheese atop corn; cover with a tortilla. Repeat with remaining tortillas and fillings.

4. Spray a frying pan with cooking spray and place over medium heat; cook 1 quesadilla in the hot pan until cheese is melted and beans are heated through, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Repeat with remaining quesadillas; slice into quarters.

Brazilian Black Bean Stew

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1/4 pound chorizo sausage, chopped
- 1/3 pound cooked ham, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 (1 pound) sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 small hot green chile pepper, diced
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 (16 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 mango - peeled, seeded and diced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

This easy yet wonderful stew can be made any time of year.

The meat can be omitted without compromising the dish.

Directions:

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat, and cook the chorizo and ham 2 to 3 minutes. Place the onion in the pot, and cook until tender. Stir in garlic, and cook until tender, then mix in the sweet potatoes, bell pepper, tomatoes with juice, chile pepper, and water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer 15 minutes, until sweet potatoes are tender.
2. Stir the beans into the pot, and cook uncovered until heated through. Mix in the mango and cilantro, and season with salt.



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