



ANN BLOOM
NUTRITION: IT'S ALL GOOD

Celebrating National Beef Month

No one in America needs to ask what's for dinner. It's beef, right? Beef is the most popular meat on American dinner tables, according to meat specialty websites. In 2018, Americans on average consumed 57 pounds of beef, almost a pound a week. It's no longer just for dinner, though. Recipes featuring beef, in many forms, can be found in dishes for breakfast and lunch, too.

February is National Beef Month. Beef has appeared in the lexicon of American advertising several times. Many people remember Clara Peller and her "Where's the beef?" commercials for Wendy's restaurants back in 1984. Then, in 1992, "Beef. It's what's for dinner," was launched by the National Livestock and Meat Board to promote the consumption of beef.

"Beef is categorized as a red meat," writes Atli Arnarson, Ph.D., "a term used for the meat of mammals which contains higher amounts of iron than poultry or fish." A Healthline.com contributor, he writes that fresh, lean beef is rich in various vitamins and minerals especially iron and zinc. Therefore, beef is recommended as part of a healthy diet.

Beef is composed of protein and varying amounts of fat. The protein content of lean cooked beef is 26% to 27%. It contains all nine essential amino acids needed for the growth and maintenance of the body. Meat is one of the most complete dietary sources of protein.

Beef contains varying amounts of fat which contributes to flavor and calorie content. It also contains B Vitamins, zinc, iron, and niacin (a B Vitamin).

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) definition of a lean cut of beef is a 3.5-ounce serving that contains less than 10 grams total fat. The Mayo Clinic website lists lean cuts cited by the USDA as round roast, bottom round roast, and top sirloin steak among others.

There are eight main, sometimes referred to as primal, cuts of beef. These eight primal cuts are divided into more than 60 sub-primal cuts according to certifiedangusbeef.com.

The cuts are the brisket, shank, rib, loin, round, chuck, flank and short plate.

Beef may be prepared several ways including grilling, broiling, stir frying, roasting and baking. Muscle usage during the life of the animal, marbling, bones and other factors all contribute to the flavor and texture of each cut of meat. Marbling is the white fat streaking that runs through the meat. It is what also contributes to the tenderness of the cut of meat.

According to the website, frugalcity.com, less tender cuts of meat such as cuts from the chuck or round like chuck roast and round steak benefit from marinades and slow cooking in the oven or in a slow cooker, to tenderize them. The most expensive cut of beef is the filet mignon, a cut of meat taken from the tenderloin's narrower end. This muscle is not used much during the steer's life and is very tender. Another tender cut is the New York strip steak.

Beef can be frozen for six months to a year if properly wrapped. Thawing and refreezing is not recommended as this affects the texture and quality of the meat.

Meat should be stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator and can be kept there until ready for use, usually two to three days. It should be kept in a plastic bag on the lowest shelf to avoid the potential of raw meat juices coming into contact with other food. Meat should be thawed in the refrigerator, not on a kitchen counter. Meat left at room temperature invites bacteria growth which can cause a food borne illness.

Clara Peller no longer wonders where's the beef, but Sam Elliott is still telling us that beef is what's for dinner.

For more information and recipes featuring beef, visit www.foodhero.org to see what you can make for dinner... or lunch...or breakfast, using beef.

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Banish menu monotony

Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Mushroom rice with turmeric, an easy vegetable side dish.

Simple but satisfying side dishes for weeknight meals

By **DANIEL NEMAN**
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

It's a weeknight. You already know what you're making for the main course — something simple but satisfying.

But what about a side dish? You could steam some green beans, again. You could steam some asparagus, again. You could bake a potato, again.

But you have been there and you have definitely done that.

You want a vegetable side dish that does justice to your entrée. But it's a weeknight, so you want it to be simple. Simple but satisfying.

After perusing perhaps 200 vegetable recipes, I can definitely state that, according to them, there is one consistent, no-fail method to sprucing up your vegetables: add cream. I don't care what the vegetable is, dousing it in a gallon or two of heavy cream is going to make it taste better.

If you have an exceptional metabolism or are a boxer trying to step up a class in weight, I recommend it. Otherwise, you might be happier trying these other four vegetable dishes that I recently made. Each one is quick, simple and unfussy.

Mushroom Rice With Turmeric, for instance, is a vast improvement on ordinary rice. For that matter, it is an improvement on mushrooms, and also turmeric.

The rice is cooked with mushrooms, onion and garlic, and flavored (and colored) with turmeric. Instead of water it is cooked with chicken broth, which is a surefire way to make your rice more flavorful, and it is mostly cooked in the oven instead of on the stove top.

I don't know why that would make a difference, but it certainly did not hurt.

Next up was Green Beans With Mustard Sauce. I love green beans, but it is more for the low cost and the ease with which they are made than for the flavor. But that is only because I had not previously considered making them with a mustard sauce.

Do not be daunted by the thought of a mustard sauce. That term is far too fancy for what this sauce is. It's just a mixture of olive oil, lemon juice and a bit of Dijon mustard. But that mixture, which is just the simplest of vinaigrettes, does magical things to a plate of hot green beans.

A basic vinaigrette also provides the necessary balance to an Italian favorite, Three Bean Salad.

The three beans in question are cannellini beans (or any



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Easy vegetable side dishes lined up from front to back, green beans with mustard sauce, mushroom rice with turmeric, three-bean salad and roasted parsnips.

white beans), garbanzo beans and lentils. Because this is a weeknight dish, all are served fresh out of the can — but only if you can find canned lentils. I bought mine at a health food store, but if that is inconvenient you can always cook your own dried lentils. They don't take long, especially if you use red lentils.

Beans, of course, are noted for their earthiness, so they need something to enliven them. That's where the vinaigrette comes in. The mixture here of olive oil, white wine vinegar and lemon juice perks up the flavors and brings the dish to life.

Amazingly, it only takes a few minutes to make something that tastes this good.

My last weeknight vegetable side dish is the easiest of all. And to many Americans, it is the least familiar.

Parsnips are a forgotten vegetable in this country, despite being quite delicious. A root vegetable, they are in the same family (Apiaceae) as carrots, and also parsley. Celery, too, as well as dill and chervil, but when you see parsnips you are going to think of carrots.

Their taste is probably closer to carrots than anything else, but the flavor is actually unique. They are earthy, but a little sweet. And if you roast them, they become sweeter still.

To roast parsnips, all you have to do is peel them and cut them into pieces. Toss the pieces in olive oil, salt and pepper, and cook them in the oven.

What could be simpler?

MUSHROOM RICE WITH TURMERIC

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

¾ pound mushrooms
1 ½ tablespoons butter
½ cup finely chopped onion
1 clove garlic, finely minced
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
1 cup uncooked rice
1 bay leaf
1 ¼ cups chicken broth
Salt and pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Remove the stems from the mushrooms. Cut the mushroom caps into ¼-inch cubes. There should be about 2 cups.
3. Heat butter in an ovenproof

saucepan with a tight-fitting lid and add the onion and garlic. Cook about 2 minutes and add the mushroom. Cook about 5 minutes, frequently stirring. Sprinkle with turmeric and add the rice and bay leaf. Stir until the rice is coated and add the chicken broth, and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and bring to a boil on top of the stove.

4. Once boiling, move to oven and bake for exactly 17 minutes. Remove the cover and discard the bay leaf. Fluff rice with a fork.

Per serving (based on 4): 251 calories; 5 g fat; 3 g saturated fat; 13 mg cholesterol; 7 g protein; 45 g carbohydrate; 3 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 885 mg sodium; 16 mg calcium

— Adapted from "Craig Claiborne's The New York Times Cook Book" by Craig Claiborne and Pierre Franey

GREEN BEANS WITH MUSTARD SAUCE

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound green beans
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
Juice of ½ lemon
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper