

RECIPES BY [STANLEY DRY](#) PHOTOGRAPHY BY [EUGENIA UHL](#)

Come February, our New Year's resolution about eating healthier has begun to fade from memory, so now's a good time to reinforce our resolve. This month's recipes, created with an eye to limiting fat and calories, can help. They are both nutritious and delicious, none of them are difficult to execute, several of them feature fruits and vegetables and all of them will bring smiles around the dinner table.



Chicken thighs are a good source of protein, niacin, riboflavin, vitamins B12 and B6, as well as minerals and amino acids.

Light Recipes

Thin Pork Chops with Dried Fruit

For this dish, use very thinly sliced boneless pork chops, sometimes labeled “Breakfast Pork Chops.” It takes about six of them to make a pound. They are lean and cook quickly.



RECIPE

- 4 dried apricots
- 1 cup freshly brewed strong black tea
- 4 dried plums (prunes)
- ¼ cup golden raisins
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- cayenne pepper to taste
- 4 thin pork chops
- coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

STEP 1 Simmer apricots in tea, covered, until plumped, about 10 minutes. Uncover, add plums, raisins, vinegar and cayenne. Simmer until the liquid is thick and syrupy.

STEP 2 Preheat oven to 375 F and oil a nonreactive baking dish large enough to hold chops in one layer. Cut away visible fat from pork chops, pat dry with paper towels, add to baking dish and season with salt and black pepper. Spoon fruit and syrup over chops and bake until pork is cooked through, about 10 minutes.

STEP 3 Serve over couscous or rice.

SERVES 4

NUTRITION FACTS



PORK is an excellent source of protein and minerals.



DRIED FRUITS are a good source of fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.



Spaniards brought **APRICOTS** to Mexico, and in the 18th century cultivation of the fruit spread to California.



Pomegranates provide fiber, as well as a variety of vitamins and minerals.

Sow in Love

Pork loves sweet and tart flavors. Pomegranate molasses (available in Middle Eastern stores) provides both.

Roasted Pork Loin Filet with Pomegranate and Pomegranate Molasses

“Spanish sailors took the pomegranate from the Mediterranean region, where it had long been cultivated, to America.”—The Oxford Companion To Food

- 1 pork loin filet (about 1½ pounds)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly-ground black pepper
- ½ lemon
- 2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses plus additional for garnish
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds

1. Rub pork with olive oil. Combine salt and pepper and rub into meat. Place loin in a plastic bag. Squeeze lemon juice over meat and add 2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses. Squeeze bag and rotate loin so that it is completely covered with the seasonings. Seal bag and marinate for a few hours or overnight in the refrigerator.

2. Preheat oven to 350 F. Place pork loin in a shallow baking pan and roast, basting occasionally with marinade, until juices run clear when pierced, about 45 minutes. Let meat rest for 5 minutes before slicing. Serve drizzled with pomegranate molasses. Garnish with fresh pomegranate seeds.

SERVES 4

An Act of Gourd

Cushaw, like other winter squashes, is extremely versatile and can be used in everything from soup to pie. Extremely large specimens can be difficult to peel, but small ones are easily dispatched when cut into manageable portions. This very basic dish showcases the sweet and delicate flavor of cushaw.

Baked Cushaw with Parmesan and Parsley

Cushaw, which is also known as sweet potato pumpkin or Tennessee sweet potato, can grow to 20 pounds.

- 1 small cushaw (about 2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

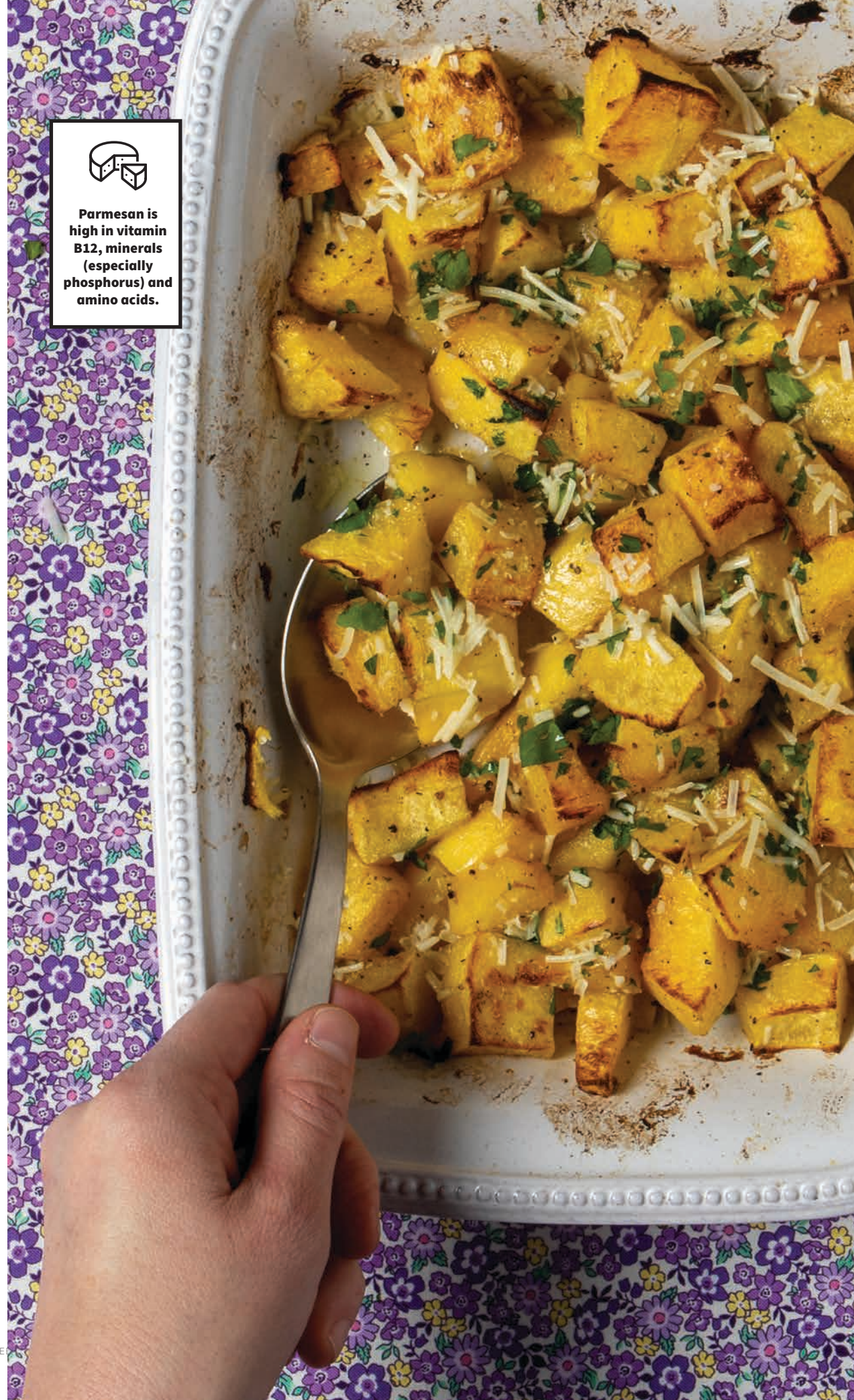
1. Preheat oven to 350 F and oil a 9-inch baking dish. Cut off neck of squash and cut a slice off the bottom. Split squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and fibers. Cut each half lengthwise into strips about 1½ inches wide. Peel squash and cut into 1-1½ inch cubes. Toss with olive oil, season generously with salt and pepper and turn into baking dish.

2. Bake in preheated oven until squash is tender, about 45 minutes. Sprinkle with Parmesan and chopped parsley.

SERVES 4



Parmesan is high in vitamin B12, minerals (especially phosphorus) and amino acids.



Fennel, Orange and Pecan Salad

This is a wonderfully bright and refreshing salad. Exact measurements are difficult because fennel bulbs and navel oranges vary so much in size.

RECIPE

- 1 large or 2 small fennel bulbs
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- coarse salt to taste
- 1 large or 2 small navel oranges
- fennel fronds
- ½ cup pecan pieces

STEP 1 Cut fennel bulb(s) from stalk and remove tough outer leaves. Cut bulb lengthwise into two pieces and cut away the core. Using a mandoline or very sharp knife, cut into very thin slices. Julienne slices, add to salad bowl and toss with olive oil and lemon juice. Season with salt.

STEP 2 Peel orange(s) and remove all pith. Section orange(s) and cut each section into 2 or 3 pieces, depending on size. Add to bowl. Separate fennel fronds and scatter over salad. Add pecans and toss.

SERVES 4



Fennel, along with celery, dill and parsley, is a member of the carrot family.

NUTRITION FACTS



FENNEL provides fiber, vitamins A and C and a variety of minerals.



NAVEL ORANGES are an excellent source of vitamin C, as well as minerals and amino acids.



PECANS provide fiber, protein, calcium, iron, a variety of vitamins, minerals and amino acids.

Winter Vegetable Soup

This is one of my favorite seasonal soups. With good bread, it is substantial enough to make a meal. Use enough cayenne pepper to give the soup a little kick, providing a contrast to the sweetness of the vegetables.



NUTRITION FACTS



CARROTS are an excellent source of vitamin A, other vitamins, minerals and amino acids.



PARSNIPS are an excellent source of vitamin C, provide fiber and a range of vitamins and minerals.



TURNIPS provide vitamin C and a range of minerals and amino acids.

 Winter squash is a good source of Vitamins A, B6 and C, as well as minerals and amino acids.

“**Eat soup first and eat it last, and live till a hundred years be past.**”

FRENCH PROVERB

RECIPE

- 8 cups chicken stock
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 medium onions
- 1 pound carrots
- 1 pound parsnips
- 1 pound turnips
- 1 pound winter squash
- coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- cayenne pepper to taste
- extra virgin olive oil to taste
- ¼ cup chopped parsley

STEP 1 Combine stock and tomato paste in a large, heavy pot and bring to a boil.

STEP 2 Chop onions and add to pot. Peel carrots, cut into chunks and add to pot. Peel parsnips, slice and add to pot. Peel turnips, cut into chunks and add to pot. Peel winter squash, cut into chunks and add to pot.

STEP 3 Simmer until vegetables are tender. Season with salt, black pepper and cayenne.

STEP 4 When serving, add some of your best olive oil to each bowl of soup and garnish with chopped parsley.

SERVES 6



Fowl Play

Lemon and green olives transform bland chicken thighs into a bright and flavorful dish. Orzo, the rice-shaped pasta, adds substance.

Chicken Thighs with Lemon, Green Olives and Orzo

“The lack of flavour has meant that chickens are particularly suited to dishes which involve distinctive added flavours.”—The Oxford Companion To Food

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- Cajun/Creole seasoning to taste
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 4 lemon slices
- 24 green olives
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup orzo
- coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. Pat chicken thighs dry with paper towels, then sprinkle liberally with Cajun/Creole seasoning. Add olive oil to a large, nonreactive skillet and cook chicken thighs on medium heat until nicely browned, about 6 minutes. Turn chicken and brown on the other side, about 4 minutes. Remove chicken from pan and pour off fat. Add chicken stock and scrape up the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Return chicken thighs to pan and place a slice of lemon on each thigh. Add olives and lemon juice to pan and simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 10 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, cook orzo until al dente, according to package instructions. Drain orzo, reserving some of the cooking water. When chicken is done, remove thighs from pan and add orzo. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer orzo for a minute or two to meld flavors, adding some of the cooking water, if necessary. Return chicken to pan and serve.

SERVES 4



Lemon juice and peel are good sources of Vitamin C.