

In the Kitchen – After the Holidays – by Marcy Lytle

It's January. It's time for good bites in the kitchen in the coziness of your own home, recipes you can whip up and enjoy with friends, or just your family. Things you can eat while you enjoy a movie, or do a puzzle, or whatever you do on cold winter nights...

Cranberry Salsa

I know. Christmas is over. But this salsa was a hit, and it would be great all month long, when you're inside watching movies...because it's so good...with tortilla chips!

12 oz fresh cranberries

4 T pure maple syrup

½ small red onion, finely chopped

1 jalapeno chile, finely chopped

1 cup cilantro leaves, finely chopped

1 cup cooked and cooled beets finely chopped (optional, but super delish)

1 large garlic clove, minced

1 large lime, juiced

¼ t sea salt, or to taste

Add cranberries to food processor with syrup. Pulse until finely chopped. Transfer to a bowl and add rest of ingredients. Taste and season accordingly (add more salt or lime juice or syrup if desired.) (You can also use the processor to chop all ingredients if you wish.)

Place in fridge and chill for 30 minutes at least, before enjoying. Tastes good the next day, too!

Black Eyed Pea Dip

- 4 cups Trappey's black eyed pea with jalapeno, juice reserved to taste
- ½ medium onion chopped and sauted.
- 4 oz green chiles
- 12 oz old English sharp cheddar

Prepare onion, Mix all other ingredients, and heat. Serve with Fritos.

Sheet Pan Nachos

I've shared other recipes of these before, but they're just so easy, you need to remember this so you can make them this winter.

- Tortilla chips (use up your red and green ones if you didn't eat them over Christmas!) – stout chips not thin ones
- Shredded chicken with green chiles (Trader Joe's) or one at your store
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- Cheddar cheese, grated
- Avocado, diced with lime juice and salt

- Salsa of your choice
- Fresh tomatoes, chopped

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare the shredded chicken according to package directions (I purchased the one already cooked, so I just had to heat.) Lay out the chips on a baking sheet. Making sure to drain all liquids, lay on the chicken, then the beans, and the cheese. Melt in oven til cheese melts. Top with avocado, fresh tomatoes and salsa. Enjoy right from the pan!

Cucumber Sandwich Plate

I know, this is usually a spring treat, but why not enjoy in the dead of winter on pretty paper plates left over from the holidays? I found these at Marshalls.

- Cucumbers, thinly sliced
- Garden vegetable cream cheese spread
- White bread
- Hummus (store bought or make your own)
- Guacamole (store bought or make your own)
- Sliced olives
- Chips and crackers

Spread the cream cheese on the white bread, and lay on the cucumber slices. Sprinkle with black pepper. Place on the top piece of bread and cut off the edges, then cut into fourths. Line up on a plate, with three little cups in the middles, and chips on the side!

Nachos To-Go

Sometimes, we both need a lunch to go. And sometimes we need something simple, to go or to stay in, while we relax and work at our desks. These nachos to-go fill that need, and they're fun and tasty!

- Chicken breasts, cubed
- Grated cheddar
- Half avocado for each person
- Salsa

Season the chicken cubes with taco seasoning, salt and pepper, and drizzle with olive oil. Then bake at 375 until the nuggets are tender. It takes less time than you think, so check them! Grab a bento box and place the chicken and cheese in one spot, the half avocado (lime juice and salt on top) in the another, and a little salsa in the last box. Enjoy...

Fried Rice on the Fly

We had some random veggies, a bag of quick rice, a couple eggs, and soy sauce in the fridge and sliced almonds. And an orange! It all came together as a delicious meal.

Chop whatever veggies you have on hand into small pieces, and grill in olive oil and butter in pan. We had leeks, carrots, broccoli, onion, and a potato. These grill up nicely, while you boil your quick rice or make according to box directions.

I wanted teriyaki, so I just added honey and maple syrup, and a bit of cornstarch to the soy sauce and stirred and tasted. This was my sauce.

As the veggies were done, I squeezed fresh orange juice on top and poured in the sauce. We served it over the rice, with sliced almonds on top!