



Simple shortcuts for globally inspired dishes

Delicious, plant-forward, globally-inspired dishes are not out of reach, even for inexperienced cooks or for those who don't like to spend a lot of time in the kitchen. For delicious meals that virtually transport you to traditional dining tables all over the world, you can succeed with just a handful of simple ingredients and a few minutes to put them together.

Mexican-Inspired Black Bean Soup

Blend one 15-ounce can of black beans (with their liquid) with 1 cup of vegetable broth and 1/2 cup of jarred salsa until mostly smooth, then heat in a saucepan for 5 minutes. Top with a squeeze of lime, chopped cilantro, and diced avocado.

Japanese Curry

Simmer 1 pound of cubed tofu with 2 cups of chopped vegetables (carrots, potatoes, onion) in 3 cups of water for about 15 minutes, until tender. Break 2 to 3 large curry cubes (S&B Golden Curry and Vermont Curry are both widely available) into the pot and stir until melted into a thick sauce, about 5 minutes. Serve over rice.

Korean Bibimbap

Rehydrate 1/2 cup of dried shiitake mushrooms in hot water for 15 minutes, then slice and sauté with a splash of soy sauce and sesame oil until browned. Top 2 cups of cooked rice with the mushrooms and a spoonful of gochujang, a fermented Korean chili paste sold jarred in most grocery stores, then finish with a drizzle of sesame oil. A fried egg on top is optional and traditional.

Thai-Inspired Peanut Noodles

Whisk together 1/4 cup of peanut butter, 2 tablespoons of soy sauce, 1 tablespoon of rice vinegar, 1 tablespoon of honey or brown sugar, and 2 tablespoons of warm water until smooth. Toss with 8 ounces of cooked noodles (rice noodles or spaghetti both work) and top with shredded carrot, sliced cucumber, and chopped peanuts. A squeeze of lime and a pinch of red pepper flakes brighten it up if you have them on hand.

Indian-Inspired Chickpea Bowl

Warm one 15-ounce can of chickpeas (drained) in 1 cup of jarred simmer sauce (tikka masala is the easiest to find) over medium heat for about 5 minutes. Add cooked veggies like cubed potatoes, peas, or carrots, heat through, and serve with warm naan (or pita) or rice. Garnish with fresh cilantro if you have it.

Japanese-Inspired Ramen

Warm 1 tablespoon of sesame oil in a saucepan over medium heat, add 2 minced garlic cloves and 1 tablespoon of grated fresh ginger, and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant. Add 4 cups of vegetable broth and 3 tablespoons of soy sauce, and simmer for 10 minutes. If you have plain ramen noodles on hand, cook 8 oz according to the package. Otherwise, bring a separate pot of water to a boil with 2 teaspoons of baking soda per quart and cook 1/2 lb angel hair pasta according to the package directions. (The baking soda mimics the alkaline noodles used in real ramen, giving regular pasta a closer texture and color.) Drain, divide into bowls, and ladle the hot broth over the noodles. Top with cubed soft tofu or a soft-boiled egg, sliced green onion, and a drizzle of chili oil.

Quick Mujadara (Lentils and Rice)

Simmer 1 cup of rinsed brown or green lentils with 1 cup of rice in 4 cups of water for about 20 minutes, until both are tender and the water is absorbed. Top generously with store-bought crispy fried onions, the kind sold for green bean casserole, instead of caramelizing your own for 45 minutes.

Mole Tofu and Rice Bowl

(a full recipe!)



Traditional mole can take dried chiles, hours of simmering, and a long list of ingredients most people don't keep on hand. This version leans on peanut butter and cocoa powder to get most of the way there in under 30 minutes.

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 3 tbsp peanut butter
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 lb extra-firm tofu, cubed
- Cooked rice, for serving

Instructions:

Warm the oil in a saucepan over medium heat, add the onion, and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 more minute. Transfer the onion and garlic to a blender along with the vegetable broth, peanut butter, cocoa powder, chili powder, cumin, and cinnamon, and blend until smooth.

Return the sauce to the pan, add the tofu, and simmer for 10 minutes, until the sauce has thickened slightly and the tofu is heated through. Serve over rice.