

Recipes from *Queen Anne's Lace*

China Bayles #26

By Susan Wittig Albert

Carrots, wild carrots, and their *Daucus* relatives are worthy of a recipe collection all their own. Here are recipes for some of the foods mentioned in this book, to add to your own collection of favorite carrot recipes.

Cass's Couscous Carrot Salad

If you prefer (I do!), substitute 2 tablespoons candied ginger for the grated fresh ginger. For an entirely different taste, omit the basil and add 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint. I've also made this dish with white and brown rice.

1/2 cup slivered almonds
1 cup water
Grated rind of 1/2 lemon
1 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 cup couscous
1/4 cup raisins
1 cup grated carrot
1 teaspoon allspice
1/2 cup chopped fresh basil
Juice of 1 lemon

Toast the nuts in a skillet over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until they are golden (about 3 minutes). Set aside. Combine the water, lemon rind, salt, and oil in a saucepan, and heat until almost boiling. Add couscous and raisins, remove from heat, and cover. Let steam for 10 minutes, then fluff with a fork, breaking up any clumps. Add carrot, allspice, basil, lemon juice, and nuts. Serve warm or at room temperature, to 4.

One-Dish Moroccan Chicken and Carrots

A slow-cooker recipe, easy enough for weekdays, exotic enough for a special meal. Traditionally served over warm rice, but it also goes well with pasta.

1 pound carrots, peeled and cut diagonally into 2-inch lengths
6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs
The juice of 1 lemon
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon cumin
1/2 teaspoon coriander seeds, crushed
Cayenne pepper, pinch
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper (or to taste)
1 lemon, sliced as thinly as possible
2/3 cup sliced onions
1/4 cup golden raisins

1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted if desired
Rice, for serving (optional)

Place the carrots in the slow cooker. Layer chicken thighs on top. Brush lemon juice evenly over the chicken. Mix together garlic, cinnamon, cumin, coriander seeds, cayenne pepper, salt, and black pepper. Sprinkle evenly across the chicken. Add lemon slices and sliced onions. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 8 hours. Add raisins and almonds before serving over warm rice. Serves 4-5, depending on how hungry they are.

China's Peach-and-Carrot Cobbler

I use canned peaches for this easy cobbler. If you're using fresh fruit, you'll want 2-3 large peaches, sliced. If you like coconut, add 1/2 cup to the filling.

Start with the batter:

1/2 cup melted butter
1 cup flour
1 cup sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup milk
1 egg

Melt the butter in a 9x13-inch oven-proof dish or pan. Mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Stir in milk and egg, making sure there are no lumps. Pour evenly over melted butter.

To make the filling, combine:

1 (28 ounce) can sliced peaches, drained
1 1/2 cups shredded carrots
1 1/4 cups sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup coconut (optional)

Mix well and spread over batter—but don't stir it in! The batter will rise to the top during the baking. Bake 35-45 minutes at 350°F. Serve warm with ice cream to 6-8.

Queen Anne's Lace Jelly

For refrigerator jelly, start by washing and sterilizing 6 four-ounce jars and lids. If you want to store your jelly on the shelf, you will need to process the jars in a hot water bath, following (carefully!) the instructions on the pectin box.

2 cups rinsed, prepared, and tightly packed Queen Anne's lace flowers
3 1/2 cups water, in a large saucepan
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 package powdered pectin (Pomona, Sure-Jell)
3 1/2 cups sugar
1 drop red food coloring (optional—makes a pretty pink jelly)

Rinse out any nectar-loving insects from the flowers. Snip the blossoms from the bracts. Bring the water to a boil, add the flowers, and cover. Let steep for an hour. Strain, discarding the flowers. Measure 3 cups of the liquid into a saucepan. Add lemon juice and pectin. Bring to a rolling boil. Add sugar, stirring, and return to a boil. Boil for 1 minute, and remove from the heat. If you want to color the jelly pink, add 1 small drop of red food coloring. Pour carefully into prepared jars and apply lids. For refrigerator jelly, cool and refrigerate. For shelf storage, process in a hot water bath, cool, and store.

Pesto Chicken and Carrot Wraps

A great use of that leftover rotisserie chicken. Or you can quickly cook and shred two boneless, skinless chicken breasts. For pesto, when I don't have pine nuts, I often substitute other nuts (pecans, walnuts, almonds, cashews) or even canned white beans. Some people say they can taste the difference. I can't, especially in a recipe like this one, where this filler/binder is mixed with other ingredients.

To make the pesto
2 cups fresh basil leaves (no stems)
2 tablespoons pine nuts
2 large cloves garlic
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Combine first three ingredients in a blender or food processor. Process until finely minced. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a slow stream, scraping down the sides (carefully). When smooth, add the cheese and refrigerate. You'll have enough for the wraps, plus more for salad.

To make the filling, mix together
4 cups cooked chicken, shredded
1/2 cup pesto
1 teaspoon cumin

For the wraps
4 wraps (tortillas, wraps, or thin pita bread)
4 slices Swiss cheese
2 cups shredded arugula or spinach leaves
2 cups thinly julienned or grated carrots
olive oil for brushing

To assemble: lay out four wraps. Place one slice of cheese on each wrap, followed by 1 cup chicken, 1/2 cup shredded greens, and 1/2 cup carrots. Roll up tightly. Brush each wrap with olive oil and heat in a hot sandwich maker, a Panini press, or a non-stick pan on medium heat.

Tomato Basil Soup

The carrot lends body, flavor, and nutrition to this homemade soup. If you prefer a creamier soup, substitute cream, half-and-half, or evaporated milk for a portion of the chicken stock.

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion

3 cloves garlic, minced
2 stalks celery, diced
1 medium carrot, thinly sliced
1 28-ounce can tomatoes
1 1/2 cups chicken stock
6 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
Sour cream

Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Sauté the onion, adding celery and carrot when the onion is translucent. Cook together until the carrots are soft. Add tomatoes. Puree until smooth with your immersion stick or in a blender. (Careful: it's hot!) Return to heat. Add chicken stock and basil. Bring to a boil and simmer on low heat for 4-5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle into serving bowls, dollop sour cream on top. Makes 4 2-cup servings, 8 1-cup servings.

Healthy Carrot-Maple Muffins

The whole family will love these tasty muffins—and they're nutritious, too. This recipe makes 12 regular-size muffins, 22-24 mini-muffins. To cut the prep time, double the recipe and freeze the extras.

1 3/4 cups flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon salt (may be omitted)
1/2 cup raisins or craisins, tossed in 1 teaspoon flour
2 cups peeled and grated carrots
1/2 cup chopped nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds)
1/3 cup olive oil
1/2 cup maple syrup
2 large eggs, beaten
1 cup plain yogurt
1/2 teaspoon maple flavoring (optional)
1 teaspoon vanilla

Prepare your muffin tin (grease or insert paper muffin cups). In a large mixing bowl, mix together flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and salt. Blend thoroughly. Toss the raisins or craisins with 1 teaspoon flour (to keep them from sticking together). Add to flour mixture. Add grated carrots and nuts and mix well.

In a medium bowl (I use a 4-cup glass pitcher for easy pouring), combine the oil and syrup and whisk together. Add the beaten eggs and mix well, then add the yogurt, maple flavoring, and vanilla. Mix well. Stir all together. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and mix with a big spoon, just until combined. As with all muffins, don't overmix: a few lumps won't hurt.

Fill the muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake at 450°F for 13-14 minutes, or until the muffins are golden on top and a wooden pick inserted into a muffin comes out clean. Turn out onto a rack immediately.

Spinach and Carrot Quiche

Great for brunch or Saturday night supper. Prebaking the crust of this custard pie keeps it from getting soggy. If you prefer, you can bake the filling in a greased (or sprayed) casserole dish, as a crust-less quiche. For individual servings, you can bake the filling in a muffin tin (instructions below).

Unbaked crust for 1 9" pie, prebaked for 15 minutes and cooled
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 onion diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 (10 ounce) package frozen spinach, thawed (about 1 1/2 cups)
3/4 cup shredded carrots
2 cups shredded cheese (Monterey Jack, cheddar, mozzarella—or a mix)
6 eggs
1 cup half-and-half or evaporated milk
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper

In a skillet, heat the oil. Sauté the onion and garlic. Mix with spinach and carrots. Evenly spread the cheese across the cooled prebaked crust. Spread the spinach-carrot mixture over the cheese. Beat eggs, then beat with half-and-half or evaporated milk, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Pour egg mixture over filling. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes. (The quiche will set more firmly as it cools.) Serve warm or cold; slices may be reheated in the microwave.

For individual servings baked in a muffin tin. Spray the tin generously. Cut pie crust, tortillas or thin bread slices in circles to fit the bottoms of the cups. Add cheese and spinach-carrot mixture. Fill cups 2/3 full with egg mixture. Bake until almost set and tops are puffed and brown.

Cosmetic Carrot-Infused Oil

There are two kinds of oils commonly called “carrot oil.” The first is cold-pressed from carrot seeds and mixed with a carrier oil; the second is a carrot-infused oil you can make at home from the flesh of the carrot. Both oils are rich in beta carotene, vitamins A and E and pro-vitamin A and may help to heal dry, chapped and cracked skin and condition hair. Here’s a recipe for the carrot-infused oil.

2 pounds carrots, grated
Oil, enough to cover (Some excellent choices: olive, coconut, almond, avocado, grapeseed, jojoba—all good for your skin)

Peel about 2 pounds of carrots and grate with a food processor or hand grater. Place the grated carrots in a slow cooker and add enough oil to cover. Set to warm (the lowest temperature) and infuse the oil for 66-72 hours. Strain through a fine mesh or cheesecloth. Label and store in the refrigerator for up to 8 months.

To use: Carrot-infused oil may stain lighter skins. Make a sample by diluting the carrot-infused oil with a carrier oil, starting with a 1:10 ratio—that is, 1/2 teaspoon of infused oil to 5 teaspoons of carrier oil (one of the above). If that doesn’t produce a stain, increase the ratio of carrot-infused oil to the carrier oil. Once you’re satisfied with the ratio, add several drops of Vitamin E oil. Apply to skin, lips, elbows, heels. You may also mix with your favorite cream, lotion, make-up remover, shower and bath gel, or shampoo