

Kwanzaa is an African-American cultural holiday that starts the day after Christmas and goes until New Year's Day. It is a holiday rich with symbolism and pride.

The following text and recipes are adapted from a chapter in my "Almost No-Fat Holiday Cookbook", unless otherwise noted. ©Bryanna Clark Grogan 2005

KWANZAA (AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL HOLIDAY)

December 26 through January 1
(Afro-Brazilian-Caribbean Kwanzaa Karamu or Feast)

Although Kwanzaa started over 30 years ago in the United States, it is only in the last few years that I've noticed articles about Kwanzaa festivities and food in "mainstream" magazines. Kwanzaa is a non-political, non-denominational African-American cultural holiday which was the dream of Dr. Maulana (Ron) Karenga, a leading theorist of the Black Movement. Kwanzaa means "first fruits of the harvest" in the East African language of Kiswahili. Since 1966, the spirit of Kwanzaa has grown continually, and now over 5 million North Americans celebrate Kwanzaa instead of, or in addition to, Christmas.

Dr. Karenga borrowed from many African harvest festivals to create this unique holiday, which is a time to focus on Africa and African-inspired culture. It is non-religious, but definitely spiritual, and has a structure which allows for personal interpretation and offers a great opportunity for creativity. Individual families create their own Kwanza traditions. Some people use African-inspired ornaments to "Kwanzafy" their Christmas tree and other Christmas decor. In some communities there may be public dance performances, readings, exhibits and the like with African themes during Kwanzaa week.

On each of the seven days of Kwanzaa, the focus is on one of the Seven Fundamental Principles of Kwanzaa (called Nguzo Saba):

- 1.) unity (umoya)
- 2.) self-determination (kujichagulia)
- 3.) collective work and responsibility (ujima)
- 4.) cooperative economics (ujamaa)
- 5.) purpose (nia)
- 6.) creativity (kuumba)
- 7.) faith (imani)

A table is set aside to display the symbols of Kwanzaa:

- 1.) mazao (fruits and vegetables, which signify the product of unified effort)
- 2.) mkeka (an African place mat of straw or cloth that represents reverence for tradition)
- 3.) vibunzi (an ear of corn, or one for each child)
- 4.) zawadi (simple gifts, preferably handmade or related to education or African culture)
- 5.) kikombe cha umoja (the Unity Cup or communal cup for libations)
- 6.) kinara (the seven-branched candelabra, which symbolizes the continent and peoples of Africa)

7.) mishumaa saba (the seven candles, each one symbolizing one of the Nguzo Saba or 7 Fundamental Principles-- one black candle for the people; 3 red for the struggles of the people, and 3 green for the Motherland, Africa)

On each day of Kwanzaa, a family member lights a candle for one of the Seven Principles, using the middle black candle to light it and alternating from the green candles on the left to the red candles on the right. Those present are asked to think of the ways they can use the Nguzo Saba in their daily lives.

On the evening of December 31 a feast called the Kwanzaa Karamu is held. This is usually a potluck and encompasses a wide variety of foods. The table (or floor) should be decorated in African motifs with black, green and red colors, with a large mkeka (placemat). Guests are encouraged to dress in African-influenced clothing, hairstyles, jewellery, headwraps, etc..

Besides welcoming statements, African and African-inspired music, dance, poetry, storytelling, drumming, chanting, singing, and readings, a libation (usually water, as the essence of life) is poured from the Unity Cup in the Four Directions, and then passed around for everyone to sip from. The tamshi la tambiko or libation statement is recited:

For the Motherland, cradle of civilization.

For the ancestors and their indomitable spirit.

For the elders, from whom we can learn so much.

For our youth, who represent the promise for tomorrow.

For our people, the original people.

For our struggle, and in remembrance of those who have struggled in our behalf.

For Umoja, the principle of unity, which should guide us in all that we do.

For the Creator who provides all things great and small.

The names of family ancestors and black heroes are called, and the feasting commences! The feast should be a fusion of modern American, native African and all of the other influences of black culture-- West Indian, Brazilian, Creole. Since the African diet is primarily one of grains, vegetables and fruits, a vegetarian feast is appropriate, and many creative vegetarian African-American cooks are replacing the smoked meats of "soul food" dishes with vegetarian broths, liquid smoke, hot spices and roasted sesame oil.

This low-fat Afro-Brazilian-Caribbean Kwanzaa Karamu features one of my favorite company dishes, a vegetarian Feijoada from Brazil-- spicy black beans with rice, cooked greens and sliced oranges. Not only is it one of the most delicious and nutritious meals, but it is so simple to make in quantity, and the colors are absolutely stunning.

MENU

Vegetarian Jamaican "Patties" (savory stuffed pastries)*

Vegetarian Feijoada (black beans and rice)*

Kwanzaa Greens*

Louisiana hot sauce

Sliced peeled oranges

Melon and Cucumber Salsa*

Mashed Sweet Potatoes and Pineapple*

Baked yams (these are the white-fleshed ones)

Banana Muffins and Orange-Coconut Muffins*

One of the Cornbread Options*

Ginger beer, lemonade, or fruit punch

Lemon Pie*

BRYANNA'S VEGETARIAN JAMAICAN "PATTIES" (SAVORY STUFFED PASTRIES)

Makes 36 to 49

Spicy stuffed pastries with a rich curried pastry crust are sold by street vendors all over Jamaica.

Filo pastry brushed with curried vegan margarine or oil makes a crispy, lower-fat stand-in for the pastry, and a spicy filling is irresistible.

9 full sheets filo pastry
1/2 c. melted Earth Balance Natural Buttery Spread OR olive oil
1 tsp. curry powder

FILLING:

1 T. olive oil
2 large onions, minced
1 large tomato, chopped
1/2 c. green onions, minced
2 T. chopped pickled jalapeño peppers (or Scotch bonnet pepper)
2 T. lemon juice or dry sherry
1 T. soy sauce
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp. curry powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. dried thyme
1/4 tsp. ground allspice
1 pkg. Yves "ground Round" veggie "hamburger Crumbles (or approximately 2 c. of your favorite brand)

To make the Filling,

Heat the oil in a large heavy non-stick skillet over high heat; add the the onions, garlic and jalapeños and saute until the onion is limp, stirring constantly and adding dribbles of water as needed to keep the mixture from sticking.

Add the green onions and tomato. Saute until most of the liquid has evaporated. Add the salt, thyme and spices and stir-fry for a minute. Add the "hamburger crumbles", the lemon juice or sherry, and soy sauce, mix well and allow to cool.

Mix the curry powder with the melted Earth Balance or oil until dissolved. Set aside.

To fill the "patties",

stack 3 sheets of filo together, brushing each layer lightly with curried marga or oil; cut the stack into 6x5" rectangles. Repeat with the remaining filo. Keep the filo well-covered with plastic wrap while you work.

For each "pattie", place about 3 T. of the Filling in one corner of a rectangle of filo. Roll the filled end toward the center, then fold in the left and right corners like an envelope, then roll up again. Cover the filled "patties" with plastic wrap while you fill the rest.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Place the filled "patties" , seam-side-down, on nonstick or lightly-greased cookie sheets. Brush the tops lightly with the curried marga or oil. Bake the "patties" for about 20 minutes, or until golden brown.

Serve hot. (These can be made ahead and reheated.)

BRYANNA'S VEGETARIAN FEIJOADA Serves 8-10

Use a large platter or tray to serve this dish-- mound the rice around the edge of the dish and fill the center with the beans, using a pitcher for the bean broth. Serve with Kwanzaa Greens and sliced peeled oranges, Louisiana hot sauce and the salsa below (or your own favorite), vinegar or lemon juice, and sliced onions which have been marinated in vinegar for several hours.

4 c. dried black (turtle) beans
12 c. vegetarian broth
4 onions, chopped
1 (28 oz.) can diced tomatoes and juice
4 large cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. liquid smoke
1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
roasted (Asian) sesame oil to taste

Rice:

4 c. long-grain brown or brown basmati rice
6 c. water
1 tsp. salt

Place the dried beans (unsoaked) in a large pot with the broth and other ingredients. Bring to a boil, boil for several minutes, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 2 to 3 hours, or until beans are tender. Taste for salt.

To pressure-cook, you need a large canning-sized pressure cooker, or you can do it in two batches. Cook the beans, broth, onions, tomatoes, garlic, liquid smoke and herbs at 15 lbs. pressure for 40 minutes.

About an hour before serving, heat a large heavy saucepan with a tight lid. Add the rice and stir it over high heat with a wooden spoon for 2 minutes. Add the water and salt. Bring to a boil, cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 45 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand about 15 minutes before serving.

Mound the drained beans in the center of a large serving platter, sprinkle them with the sesame oil, and surround them with the rice. Pass the bean broth in a pitcher.

BRYANNA'S KWANZAA GREENS Serves 8 to 10

Collard greens are the preferred green leafy vegetable for cooking in the American South, and in West Africa, but in some Northern areas they are hard to find, unless you grow them yourself. (1 c. of cooked collards contains 357 of calcium, among other things, so, like the other greens mentioned here, this easy-to-grow vegetable is worth planting in your garden.) You can use your favorite green, or a mixture of collards, turnip greens (my favorite), kale, mustard greens, or spinach.

The traditional way to cook Southern greens is with smoked pork. Here I use vegetarian broth, liquid smoke, lots of onions and garlic, and roasted sesame oil, for lots of flavor without the fat. (Soy bacon chips or vegetarian "back bacon" or "ham", chopped up, can be sprinkled on top, if you like.)

The large amount of broth used results in a nutritious "pot liquor" which is eaten with the greens in bowls. Even though the greens are cooked for quite a long time, compared to the way we usually cook greens, nothing is lost when the "pot liquor" is enjoyed along with the greens.

If you say you don't like greens, this recipe may change your mind for good!

4-5 lbs. fresh greens (collard greens, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, or spinach, OR a mixture)

2 large onions, minced

2 large red bell peppers, seeded and diced

6 cloves garlic, chopped

6 c. vegetarian broth

a few shakes of liquid smoke

Roasted (Asian) sesame oil to sprinkle on top

salt and freshly-ground black pepper to taste

Louisiana hot sauce and vinegar on the side

OPTIONAL: soy bacon chips (I like ClubHouse brand) or bits, OR chopped vegetarian "Canadian back bacon" or "ham" to sprinkle on top

Fill your kitchen sink with lukewarm water and add the greens, trimmed of roots, tough stems and yellowed leaves. (If using spinach, wash it separately.) Swish the green around to remove grit. Take the greens out, leaving the grit in the water. Drain the greens well in a colander.

Repeat this procedure as many times as necessary, depending upon the size of your sink. (This looks like ALOT of greens, but they cook down alot, too.)

In a large, lightly-oiled heavy-bottomed pot, steam-fry the onion and garlic until limp. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add the greens in batches, filling the pot and then cooking at high heat until they go limp enough to push down into the broth. Add another

batch and repeat until all the greens are used up. (If using some spinach, don't add it at this point-- spinach cooks much more quickly than other greens.) Sprinkle with liquid smoke.

.Cover and cook at a simmer for 45-60 minutes, or until the green are tender, adding spinach and peppers when only 20 minutes of cooking time is left. Taste for salt and pepper. Serve the hot greens and "pot liquor" in bowls with vinegar and hot sauce, and the sesame oil, and optional soy bacon chips, and/or chopped vegetarian "ham" or "back bacon" on the side.

BRYANNA'S MELON AND CUCUMBER SALSA Serves 8

This "salsa" is a bit like an Indian raita or salad-- a cool but spicy mixture of fruit, vegetable, herbs and spices. It's great with the Feijoada. Melons are available just about everywhere any time of the year, but substitute more tropical fruits, such as mango or papaya, if you can get ripe, tasty ones.

about 1 lb. of cucumber, preferably the English, Armenian or European kind that you don't have to peel (if you use field cucumber, peel it)

4 c. diced ripe cantaloupe or other favorite melon

1 red or sweet onion, chopped

1/4 c. fresh lime juice

1/4 c. chopped cilantro

1 T. minced pickled jalapeño pepper

1 T. granulated light unbleached sugar or white beet sugar

1/2 tsp. salt

chile powder to sprinkle on top

Dice the cucumber and mix in a serving bowl with all of the ingredients except the chile powder. Cover and refrigerate until serving time (up to 4 hours). Before serving, stir well and sprinkle the top lightly with chile powder.

BRYANNA'S MOIST ALMOST NO-FAT BANANA MUFFINS (OR CUPCAKES)

Makes 12 (These haven't made it into a book yet.)

These are delicious and moist. With a larger amount of sugar, they can be served as cupcakes, with an icing, if you wish.

DRY INGREDIENTS:

1 and 1/4 c. wholewheat pastry flour
6 T. oat flour (oatmeal ground fine in a DRY blender)
1 and 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
pinch of ground nutmeg

LIQUID INGREDIENTS:

8 oz. Regular medium-firm tofu OR extra-firm SILKEN tofu
1 c. mashed ripe banana (about 2 medium)
1/2 c. Sucanat or brown sugar (use 1 c. for cupcakes)
1/4 c. water
1 T. lemon juice
1 tsp. vanilla
OPTIONAL: 1/2 c. raisins or chopped dates or dried apricots, or other favorite dried fruit

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

Whisk together the dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Add the optional dried fruit, if using. Combine the liquid ingredients in a blender or food processor until smooth. Pour these into the dry ingredients and stir briefly. Spoon the batter into 12 nonstick or lightly-oiled or sprayed muffin cups. Bake for 25 minutes. (If you want a crustier exterior, bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes.) Cool on a rack.

NOTE: Experiment using mashed cooked sweet potato instead of the mashed banana.

BRYANNA'S ORANGE COCONUT MUFFINS Makes 9 large or 12 medium muffins

These intensely-flavored muffins are my husband's favorite. (They haven't made it into a book yet.)

Dry Ingredients:

1 and 1/2 c. white pastry flour flour (or use half white and half wholewheat pastry flour)

6 T. oat flour (grind oatmeal fine in a DRY blender)

1 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. baking soda

1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 c. unsweetened grated coconut

Liquid Ingredients:

8 oz. Regular medium-firm tofu OR extra-firm SILKEN tofu

1/2 c. granulated light unbleached sugar or white beet sugar

1/2 c. plus 1 T. orange juice

zest (orange part only) of 1 medium orange

1 tsp. coconut extract

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In a medium bowl whisk together the dry ingredients, adding the coconut last. Combine the liquid ingredients, including the orange peel, together in a blender or food processor until smooth with flecks of orange peel.

Stir the two mixtures together briefly, then spoon evenly into nonstick or lightly-oiled or sprayed muffin cups. Bake 20 minutes, then turn on their sides or remove to a rack and cover with a tea towel for 5 minutes before serving.

CORNBREAD OPTIONS:

BRYANNA'S LIGHT AND EASY CORN MUFFINS makes 12 muffins
This is from my first book, "The Almost No-Fat Cookbook".

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

In a blender, mix until very smooth:

8 oz. medium firm regular tofu OR firm or extra-firm SILKEN tofu
1/2 c. water
1/3 c. white beet sugar or light unbleached sugar
2 T. nutritional yeast flakes
1 T. lemon juice

**NOTE: If you prefer not to use sugar, replace sugar, water AND lemon juice with 1/2 c. thawed, frozen apple juice concentrate PLUS 3 T. water.

In a medium bowl, mix together:

7/8 c. unbleached flour
3/4 c. yellow (stoneground, if possible) cornmeal
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt

Pour the blended mixture into the dry mixture, and mix just until the dry ingredients are moistened. Spoon into 12 greased muffin cups. Bake 20 minutes. If you like a softer crust on your muffins, loosen them with a knife, turn them on their sides and cover with a clean tea towel for 5 minutes while still hot from the oven.

For extra flavor, add 1 tsp. toasted cumin seeds, 1/2 c. sauteed onions, 1 c. well-drained corn kernels, 1/4 c. chopped green California chiles, and/or 2 T. soy bacon bits or chips which have been soaked in hot water for a few minutes, then drained.

VARIATIONS: follow directions for variations in the recipe below.

BRYANNA'S CREAMY CORN MUFFINS Makes 12

These are a favorite of mine, because I love anything corny, and these are double-corny! The stoneground cornmeal contains more fiber than the ordinary refined type. The creamed corn (which actually contains no cream) adds more fiber, and makes the muffins moist and sweet.

DRY MIX:

1 c. wholewheat pastry flour
1 c. yellow (stoneground, if possible) cornmeal
1/2 T. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. baking soda

WET MIX:

3/4 c. non-dairy milk
1 T. oil or melted dairy-free margarine
1/2 T. powdered egg replacer

ADDITIONAL:

14 oz. can creamed corn (this product does not contain dairy products)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Oil 12 muffin cups. Mix the Dry Mix ingredients together well in a medium bowl. Blend the Wet Mix ingredients in a blender. Pour the contents of the can of creamed corn into a smaller bowl. Pour the blended Wet Mix into the corn and stir well. Pour this mixture into the Dry Mix and mix briefly. Spoon evenly into the muffin tin. Bake 20 minutes.

Loosen them carefully with a table knife and turn them on edge. Place the muffin tin on a rack, cover the muffins with a clean tea towel and cool for a few minutes before serving. Cool thoroughly before storing in a plastic bag or rigid plastic container. These freeze well.

VARIATIONS:

HOT CHILE SURPRISE CREAMY CORN MUFFINS: Make muffins as directed above, but spoon only half the batter into 12 muffin cups. Spoon about 2 tsp. of hot red pepper or jalapeño jelly into the center of each portion. Top with the remaining batter and bake as usual.

GREEN CHILE CREAMY CORN MUFFINS: To the batter, add 1 (4 oz.) can, drained well, of chopped green California chiles. Sprinkle the top of each unbaked muffin about 1/2-1 T. dairyfree soy Parmesan.

BRYANNA'S "PERFECT" CORNBREAD

Makes 1 10" cast-iron skillet or 12 muffins

This is my favorite cornbread—Yankee-style, since it's a little sweet. It's moist and corny, high-fiber and low in fat.

(NOTE: For Southern-Style Cornbread: Use white stoneground cornmeal and omit sugar, or use only 1 T..)

DRY MIX:

1 c. yellow (stoneground, if possible) cornmeal

3/4 c. wholewheat pastry flour

1/3 c. soy or chickpea flour

1/4 c. sugar

1 tsp. baking powder

3/4 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. baking soda

WET MIX:

1 T. lemon juice with nondairy milk to make 1 and 1/4 c.

1/4 C. unsweetened smooth applesauce

2 T. oil or melted non-dairy margarine

Oil a 10" cast iron skillet and place it in the oven while you heat it up to 375 degrees F. Whisk the dry Mix ingredients together in a medium bowl. Whisk or blend the wet Mix ingredients together and add to the Dry Mix. Mix briefly and pour into the hot skillet. Bake 20 minutes.

VARIATIONS:

Follow the directions for variations in the recipe above.

BRYANNA'S MASHED SWEET POTATOES AND PINEAPPLE Serves 8-10

This recipe began as one using mashed winter squash, but it is delicious with mashed sweet potatoes, too. The tropical flavors of pineapple and ginger go well with this exotic menu.

12 medium sweet potatoes (the orange kind)

1 (19 oz.) can crushed pineapple or pineapple tidbits in unsweetened pineapple juice,
drained (reserve juice)

1 tsp. powdered ginger

salt to taste

To cook the sweet potatoes, you can use one of several ways:

Option 1.) Scrub the sweet potatoes, prick them all over and bake at 400 degrees F for 40-50 minutes, or until soft.

Option 2.) Cut the peeled sweet potatoes into 1 and 1/2" chunks, place them in a large shallow baking pan with a bit of hot water in it, cover and bake at 400 degrees F for 20-30 minutes, or til soft.

Option 3.) Cut the peeled sweet potatoes into 1" cubes and steam them for 15 minutes, or until soft.

Option 4.) Cut the sweet potatoes in half and boil in water, covered for about 20 minutes, or until soft.

Option5) To microwave whole sweet potatoes, prick them with a fork and place them like the spokes of a wheel on paper towelling on the microwave carousel. 1 5-7 oz. sweet potato takes 3-5 minutes to cook; 2 take 5-9 minutes; 3 take 6 and 1/2-10 minutes; 4 take 8-13 minutes. (Cut large potatoes in half.)

Option 6) To "micro-steam" sweet potato chunks, cut 1 lb. into 1 and 1/2" pieces, place in a microwave-safe dish or pie plate, add 2 T. water, cover and cook on HI for about 5 minutes.

Option 7) To pressure-steam sweet potatoes, large quartered ones take 5-7 minutes at high pressure (15 lbs.); 1/4" slices take 2-3 minutes. Bring pressure down quickly under cold running water.

Whichever way you cook them, scoop the flesh out of the peels if cooked whole; drain if cooked in chunks. Mash the soft sweet potato with a potato masher. Whip in a bit of the reserved pineapple juice to make it the consistency you like. Beat in the ginger and salt to taste. Spread the mashed sweet potato into a shallow lightly-oiled casserole. Spread the crushed pineapple or pineapple tidbits over the top. This can be made ahead and baked before serving.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Bake the casserole for 40-40 minutes.

BRYANNA'S EASY LEMON PIE Serves 8

This delicious, creamy pie is so easy to make that I'm sure it will become a favorite all year round. If you don't want a "meringue topping", try one of the whipped toppings below.

1 9" Vanilla Cookie Crumb Crust, prebaked for 5 minutes (see below)
OR your favorite crumb crust

FILLING:

1 lb. medium-firm tofu OR extra-firm SILKEN tofu (1 and 1/3 boxes)
3/4 c. granulated light unbleached or white beet sugar
1/2 c. fresh lemon juice
2 T. cornstarch
grated zest of 1 large lemon OR 2 tsp. lemon extract

Optional "Meringue" Topping:

1 and 1/3 tsp. agar powder (or 2 T. + 2 tsp. agar flakes) mixed with 1/4 c. cold water
3/4 c. cold water
1/2 c. powdered EnerG egg replacer (no substitutes)
1/2 c. granulated light unbleached or white beet sugar
4 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. lemon extract

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Blend the Filling ingredients together in the blender or food processor until VERY smooth. Pour this into the crust and bake for 35 minutes. Cool the pie on a rack, then refrigerate.

To make the optional "meringue",

mix the agar and water in a small saucepan and let sit for about 5 minutes. Stir over medium heat until it simmers, then allow to simmer 1 minute.

In a deep medium bowl (preferably for a stand mixer), beat the egg replacer and 3/4 c. water with an electric or rotary egg beater until like softly mounded egg whites. This takes about 10 minutes. Beat in the sugar, vanilla and lemon extract, then the cooked agar mixture. Beat well to distribute the agar evenly. When smooth and glossy, cool it in the refrigerator. It will firm up. Beat it again briefly, then pile the mixture around the edge of the pie, leaving the edge of the crust and the center showing. Make little peaks in the "meringue" with the back of a spoon. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

If you'd rather have a whipped topping than a meringue topping, try one of these recipes—this is the newest version of this recipe, which isn't in any of my books.

BRYANNA'S BEST TOFU WHIPPED CRÈME makes about 1 and 3/4 c.

This is so simple and good! Be sure to let it refrigerate for **AT LEAST** four hours before serving, so that it “sets up” nicely. This is like a softly-whipped cream and doesn't separate!

NOTE ON TOFU: The measurement for the tofu was determined by the size (actually, 300 g) that soft tub tofu comes in in my area. **DO NOT** use silken tofu for this recipe. Use the freshest available soft tub tofu (and be careful that it's not “dessert” tofu, which has sugar added).

NOTE ON CALORIES AND FAT: cashews give a rich flavor, have some thickening qualities, and save about 280 calories for the whole recipe. (1/4 c. cashews contains about 200 calories; 1/4 c. oil contains about 480 calories.)

NOTE ON EARTH BALANCE: This is a vegan “margarine” that contains no hydrogenated fats, and is made from all expeller-pressed oils. It also tastes great—buy in health food stores.

1 and 1/3 c. soft tub tofu [in plastic tub]

1/4 melted Earth Balance Natural Buttery Spread

OR 1/4 c. oil OR 1/2 oil and 1/2 melted Earth Balance

OR 1/4 c. raw cashews, ground very fine in a food processor or coffee grinder

3 T. very light granulated unbleached sugar or white beet sugar

OR 3 T. maple syrup (this will make it a little softer)

1 and 1/2 tsp. vanilla

1/2 tsp. lemon juice

OPTIONAL: (if not using Earth Balance) pinch salt

OPTIONAL: 1 T. of your favorite liqueur

Place all of the ingredients in a blender or food processor and blend for several minutes, or until **VERY** smooth and fluffy. Scrape into a small bowl, cover tightly and refrigerate for **AT LEAST** four hours before serving. This will keep for several days refrigerated.

BRYANNA'S WHIPPED TOPPING MADE WITH SILKEN TOFU makes about 2 c.
If you can't find soft tub tofu, try this recipe—it's also very good. (This is also a new recipe.)

NOTE ON EARTH BALANCE: This is a vegan "margarine" that contains no hydrogenated fats, and is made from all expeller-pressed oils. It also tastes great—buy in health food stores.

1 (12.3 oz.) box extra-firm SILKEN tofu
1/3 c. oil OR melted Earth Balance, or a combination
1/4 c. maple syrup OR very light granulated unbleached sugar or white beet sugar
1 T. soymilk
1 and 1/2 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. lemon juice
OPTIONAL (if not using Earth Balance): pinch of salt
OPTIONAL: 1-2 T. of your favorite liqueur

Whip ingredients together in food processor until VERY smooth. Refrigerate for several hours before serving.

BRYANNA'S COOKIE OR GRAHAM CRACKER CRUMB CRUST

makes one 9" crust

One caution,—fat-free crusts tend to get soggy the day after baking if they are filled, so plan to serve them the same day, or bake but don't fill them the day before serving. Check the labels of cookies to make sure they are vegan (health food stores usually carry vegan brands, of graham crackers, if nothing else).

1 and 1/2 c. plain vegan vanilla cookie (* see recipe below) or graham cracker crumbs
3 T. maple or other syrup (can use all or some Earth Balance Natural Buttery Spread, if you don't worry about fat)

OPTIONAL: 1/4 tsp. coconut or pure almond extract

Mix the ingredients together well and press onto the bottom and sides of a nonstick or lightly-oiled or sprayed 9" pie pan, leaving no holes. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5 minutes OR microwave on HI for 2 minutes, then fill and bake as directly, OR cool thoroughly before filling with a no-bake filling.

VARIATION: CHOCOLATE CRUMB CRUST: Use vegan chocolate wafer cookie crumbs instead of vanilla or graham cracker cookie crumbs, OR add 1 T. unsweetened cocoa powder to the basic crust.

* VEGAN VANILLA WAFERS (Adapted from a recipe on cookierecipe.com)

2 cups unbleached flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup Spectrum shortening or vegan margarine
1/2 T. EnerG egg replacer beaten frothy with 2 T. water
1 cup granulated very light unbleached or white beetsugar
1/4 cup non-dairy milk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

In large bowl, cream the shortening, sugar, egg replacer, "milk," and vanilla. Stir until well blended.

In a separate bowl, mix the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to sugar mixture and mix well. Cover and chill for 4 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease baking sheets.

Roll out dough on a floured surface to a 1/4 inch thickness. Cut out cookies with round cookie cutter and place 1 inch apart on cookie sheets.

Bake 18 to 20 minutes until lightly colored. Cool on wire racks.

***VEGAN CHOCOLATE WAFERS**

USE THESE COOKIES TO MAKE A CHOCOLATE WAFER CRUST

1/2 c vegan Margarine or Spectrum shortening
1/2 c. plus 2 T. Granulated unbleached or white beet sugar
1 and 1/4 c. unbleached flour
5 T. Unsweetened Dutch cocoa Powder
1/4 tsp. baking soda
1/2 T. Energ egg replacer beaten frothy with 2 T. water
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Cut a 14 x 12-inch piece of waxed paper or plastic wrap; set aside.

In a large bowl, beat margarine, sugar, egg replacer, and vanilla until light & fluffy.

In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking soda and cocoa powder. Gradually stir flour mixture into sugar mixture until evenly distributed. Divide dough into 4 equal pieces. Shape dough into an 8 to 10-inch roll. Wrap roll in waxed paper or plastic wrap.

Place wrapped roll in plastic freezer container with a tight-fitting lid, or wrap airtight in a 14 x 12-inch piece of heavy-duty foil. Label with date and contents. Store in freezer. Use within 6 months.

YIELD: 3 dozen cookies.

TO BAKE DOUGH:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease 2 large baking sheets. Slice frozen dough 1/4" thick and arrange on sheets 1/2" apart. Bake 8 to 10 minutes until cookies are set on edges and slightly firm on top. Cool on racks.