

Bold Flavors

by
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Last month, I wrote about how to effectively serve non-vegetarians, and one of the key points of that article was choosing bold flavors. This month's installment continues with a discussion of what bold flavors are and how to achieve them in order to get your meat eating friends coming back for more!

First, let's talk about what bold flavors aren't. Boiled squash served over rice. Steamed veggies dressed in tamari. Not bold. Not fun. Not even close. I'm vegan and if you served me that, I'd have words with you. Now, consider seared chayote squash with a mango chili lime sauce over toasted sesame rice and roasted potatoes and garlic with a lemon ginger tamari glaze. Bold, fun, creative, and most importantly, appetizing for meat-eaters and vegetarians alike.

What's the difference between the menus? You've probably guessed it by now. Bold flavors. How does one achieve boldness in flavor? First, go for depth. Let's face it, meat is a strong, darkly flavored, heavy ingredient and your food will be competing with that. You'll need a level of depth frequently missing in vegetarian fare. Sundried tomatoes, because their flavors have been intensified through the drying process and their sugars have been slightly caramelized, have a deeper flavor than fresh tomatoes. Toasted sesame seeds and toasted sesame oil have a darker flavor than plain sesame seeds and oil. Look for ingredients like these and let your imagination go wild.

Another way to add boldness to your meal lies in the preparation. Seared will create a stronger flavor than steamed. Roasted creates a deeper flavor than boiled. Caramelized is more flavorful than slightly sautéed. Grilled brings forth an intensity not typically found in baked food. From a health standpoint, I figure when serving meat-eaters, it's ok to throw in smoked foods, heated oils, etc. because it's still healthier than meat and keeps them from going into culinary culture shock. Many of my students are meat eaters, and after a while, they transition to healthier foods. I used to only do optimized healthy cuisine, but I wasn't able to help as many people that way.

Finally, choose ingredients that simply can't be ignored. These are flavors that scream forth from the food, "I am here!" Spicy chili peppers are a perfect example (though be careful with

your more “delicate” diners). Mangoes are a rich fruit, and citrus cuts through most flavors. Ginger and garlic are particularly strong ingredients, as are basil, pine nuts, thyme, oregano, toasted cumin seeds, cloves, allspice, fenugreek, and fresh black peppercorns. Note, organic and in-season ingredients simply taste better than their counterparts. These ingredients achieve boldness by featuring their fresh, unadulterated flavors.

See <http://www.veganculinaryexperience.com/IVURecipes.htm> for recipes and techniques. Eat healthy, eat compassionately, and eat well!

Chef Jason Wyrick is the editor and executive chef of The Vegan Culinary Experience (<http://www.veganculinaryexperience.com>), a free vegan culinary magazine designed by professional vegan chefs. He operates a successful vegan catering and culinary instruction company in the United States and has taught alongside doctors Neal Barnard, John McDougall, and Gabriel Cousens and is the first vegan instructor to teach in the Le Cordon Bleu program. You can reach Chef Wyrick at ChefJason@veganculinaryexperience.com.