

Vegetarian Flavors

Rice-stuffed squash is dish to give thanks for

By **IVY MANNING**

SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

Thanksgiving can be a tough time for vegetarians — turkey, sausage stuffing, gravy with pan drippings, green beans with bacon. Think about it: Except for the mashed potatoes and candied yams, just about everything on the table will likely have some form of meat in it.

On the day we all gather to give thanks, the vegetarians in our lives deserve something better than a plate of starch. That's why I make this sweet

squash stuffed with flavorful wild rice for my vegetarian husband every year. It's special enough that even the meat eaters in my clan ask for it.

Before the big day, I make sure to stop by the farmers market at Portland State University to load up on dried cherries for the stuffing. I love the ones sold by Cherry Country. They have loads of cherry flavor and aren't laced with preservatives.

Ivy Manning: www.chefivy.com.

Roasted Delicata Squash With Wild Rice-Cherry Stuffing

Makes 8 servings

- 2 cups wild rice
- 4½ cups vegetable broth or water
- 4 delicata squashes (2 to 3 pounds)
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium leek, thinly sliced, white and light green parts only (2 cups)
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 1½ tablespoons fresh sage, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon finely minced fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup tart dried cherries
- 1 cup vegetable stock
- 4 ounces crusty whole-wheat bread, cut into ½-inch cubes (3 cups)
- 1 cup warm water or vegetable stock

Rinse the wild rice and place it in a medium mixing bowl. Cover with lukewarm water and let rice soak for 1 hour. Drain. In a medium saucepan, bring the broth to a boil. Add the rice, cover and return to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook until rice is just tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

While the rice cooks, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Halve the squashes lengthwise and scrape out seeds and stringy bits with a teaspoon. Brush the squash with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place them cut side down in a lightly oiled baking dish, and bake for 30 minutes or until they are barely tender.

While the squash bake, heat the butter in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, add the leek and celery and cook until the leek is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add sage, rosemary, salt and dried cherries, and continue to cook for 2 minutes. Add stock and bring to simmer; remove from heat.

Drain the wild rice and place it in a mixing bowl. Add the contents of the sauté pan and the bread cubes, and stir well to combine. Season with salt and pepper. Fill the baked squash with the stuffing and place back in the baking dish. Add 1 cup of warm water or stock to the bottom of the baking dish and cover tightly with foil. Bake until squash are tender and the stuffing hot, about 20 minutes. Uncover baking dish and bake until stuffing is crisp, about 10 minutes more. Serve hot.

PER SERVING: calories: 388 (17.5% from fat); protein: 10.4 grams; total fat: 7.5 grams; saturated fat: 3.2 grams; cholesterol: 11 mg; sodium: 369 mg; carbohydrate: 73.5 grams; dietary fiber: 7.6 grams