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## Fruits of Israel

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The biblical date of Tu b'Shevat, the 15th day of Shevat (Jan. 30 this year), always signals spring in Israel, a time to plant trees and enjoy nature. In the Diaspora, it is celebrated as the New Year of Trees, an occasion to enjoy the fruits of the Holy Land. Try some of these recipes (all serving 8) for a taste of Israel.

### GOAT CHEESE ROLLS – Dairy

7 oz sharp cheddar cheese

1 C flour

1 C pecans, coarsely chopped

6 T sesame seeds

2 T sour cream

2 T cream cheese

3 T butter

8 oz goat cheese, room temperature

Salt and pepper

Combine first seven ingredients in a processor; activate until finely combined and then chill for 30 minutes. On parchment paper, roll or press dough into a 9" x 11" rectangle. Place the softened goat cheese down the center; spread almost to the edges without breaking the dough. Season to taste.

Use the parchment paper to help roll the dough and close ends securely. Lift to a narrow loaf pan and bake at 350° F for 30 minutes. Rest 10 minutes and slice. Serve warm or room temperature with pita or crackers.

### ISRAELI RICE AND PINE NUTS – Pareve or Meat

2 C long-grain rice

4 C chicken or vegetable broth

1/4 C vegetable oil

1/2 t salt and pepper to taste

1 t saffron dissolved in 1 T water

1/2 C pine nuts or almonds

2 T minced flat-leaf parsley

In a saucepan, combine rice, broth, oil, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and stir with a fork. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer 20 minutes until rice is tender and fluffy. Stir in saffron and mix well.

In a dry skillet, toast pine nuts or almonds until just golden. Stir nuts into rice. Serve hot or at room temperature garnished with parsley.

### **RADISH SALAD** – *Dairy*

1 medium cucumber, peeled, halved and seeded

1 C radishes, diced

3/4 C low-fat plain yogurt

2 T chopped golden raisins

1 T fresh lime juice

Salt and pepper to taste

1/4 t ground cumin

Dashes of hot pepper sauce to taste

Cherry tomatoes to garnish

Grate cucumber into a medium bowl and drain off liquid. Add radishes and remaining ingredients, except tomatoes. Stir gently and cover to chill 2 hours or overnight. Before serving, add the cherry tomatoes. Makes 2-3 C.

### **TILAPIA with OLIVES and CAPERS** – *Pareve*

6-8 boneless tilapia filets, about 5 oz each

Salt and pepper to taste

Juice of half a lemon

4 T olive oil

1 C white onions, sliced

1/2 C black olives

2 T capers

1/4 C white wine

1 T fresh chives, minced

Several sprigs of parsley

Lemon slices

Season fish with salt and pepper and sprinkle lightly with lemon juice. Set aside.

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook until wilted. Add olives, capers, wine and the fish. Loosely cover with foil and cook about 6 minutes. Uncover and remove the fish to a serving platter.

Increase heat and boil the sauce until it is slightly reduced. Strain sauce over the fish and garnish with chives, parsley and lemon slices.

### **MOROCCAN EGGPLANT with TAHINI and YOGURT – Dairy**

1 large eggplant

2 T olive oil

3 garlic cloves, chopped

2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped

1/2 red bell pepper, charred, peeled, seeded and minced

Salt and pepper to taste

2 T ground cumin

#### THE SAUCE:

1/2 C tahini paste

2 large garlic cloves, minced

3/4 C yogurt

1 C parsley leaves

Salt to taste

Juice of 2 small lemons

8-10 small pitas

Preheat oven to 325° F. Pierce eggplant skin with a fork. Place eggplant in oven-proof dish and bake until eggplant is tender, 60-90 minutes. Slice eggplant in half lengthwise; cool. Scoop out pulp, discard some seeds, chop pulp, and set aside.

Heat oil in a large non-corrosive skillet; sauté garlic 1 minute, then add tomatoes and roasted pepper. Season with salt and pepper, bring to a simmer, cook 10 minutes. Add the eggplant pulp and cumin. Cook 20 minutes more, stirring occasionally until most juice evaporates but mixture remains moist. Set aside.

In food processor, pulse tahini paste and garlic until smooth. Add remaining ingredients except pita; blend well.

Slit pitas halfway around the edge with a paring knife. Heat in oven 5 minutes. Spread inside

of each pocket with tahini sauce; fill with eggplant mixture.

**A HONEY of a DATE and BANANA CAKE** – Dairy or Pareve

1 C sliced almonds, lightly toasted

3/4 C chopped pitted dates

1-2/3 C + 2 T flour

2 large eggs

3/4 C honey

3 T buttermilk

1 t vanilla extract

1/2 C packed golden brown sugar

2 T cocoa powder

1 t ground allspice

1 t ground cinnamon

1 t baking soda

1/4 t salt

1/2 C unsalted butter or margarine, cut up, at room temperature

1 C (3) mashed bananas

Preheat oven to 325° F. Grease and flour or spray a 9" springform pan.

Combine almonds, dates and 2 T flour in a small bowl; toss until coated. Whisk eggs in a small bowl with honey, buttermilk\* and vanilla. Set aside.

In large bowl of electric mixer on medium speed, combine 1 -2/3 C flour, sugar, cocoa, allspice, cinnamon, baking soda and salt. Add butter or margarine pieces and half of egg mixture; beat 1 minute. Add remaining egg mixture, beat 30 seconds, and scrape down sides of bowl. Stir in bananas and almond mixture; pour into prepared pan. Bake about 1 hour. Cool 10 minutes; turn onto rack to cool completely.

*\*Note: you can add 1/2 t cider vinegar to 3 T milk or non-dairy creamer to make buttermilk.*

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