



POWER OF 5



Test Kitchen

A HOLIDAY MENU

Wow Your Family & Guests
(Brain & Heart Healthy Too!)

Melissa C. Bernstein, OT, FAOTA

Start a new tradition this holiday season preparing brain and heart healthy recipes!

The menu I have put together provides a variety of delicious foods from all food groups and with Melissa's Modifications suggestions, you can adapt this menu to any eating lifestyle if you wish, or just as outlined. Give it a try for one of your holidays or celebrations ... your family and guests will be impressed!

To Healthy Cooking & Eating!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letter 'M' being particularly large and stylized.

Appetizer

Stuffed Mushrooms (Quinoa & Veggie)

Stuffed Mushrooms (Quinoa & Veggie)

My Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms are stuffed with veggie quinoa and cheese, making for a great appetizer or side dish that's perfect for all occasions. This is a delicious way to stuff big mushrooms to share or for smaller individual mushrooms – simple to make and always a crowd favorite!

PREP TIME
10 minutes

COOK TIME
35 minutes

TOTAL TIME
45 minutes

SERVES
4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large portobello mushrooms or 8 smaller mushroom caps
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar for Mushroom Marinade
- 2 cups spinach chopped
- 1 cup chopped broccoli
- ¼ cup feta cheese crumbled (non-dairy can be used)
- ¼ teaspoon salt or to taste
- ¼ teaspoon pepper or to taste
- Quinoa

INSTRUCTIONS

Prep the oven: Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Prep the mushrooms:

Marinate the mushrooms in the balsamic vinegar for 45 min. Place the mushrooms stem side down onto a baking pan. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes until the water leaks out of them. Remove from the oven, and using paper towels, soak up excess water. Set aside.

Make the filling:

1. Carefully remove stems from mushrooms, reserve and chop the stems for the stuffing. In a skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and garlic and sauté for a couple of minutes until the onion is translucent.
2. Add the spinach to the skillet and cook for a couple more minutes, until the spinach wilts. Add salt, pepper, and chopped mushroom stems. Stir and cook for an additional couple of minutes.
3. Prepare the quinoa as directed on the package – ½ cup to 1 cups water. I often use ½ cup of veggie broth for half of the water to increase flavor.
4. Add cooked quinoa to the cooked vegetable mixture



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 stuffed mushroom

221 Calories; 11g Fat; 20g Total Carbs - 5g Fiber - 5g Sugar - 18g Cholesterol; 239mg Sodium; 718g Potassium; 13g Protein
Added Vitamins A, C, Calcium, and Iron



Stuff the mushrooms: Stuff the mushrooms with the mixture equally. Top with shredded cheese. If using smaller mushrooms, you should have enough mixture for about 8 mushrooms.

Bake: Bake for 10 minutes or until the cheese melts, serve immediately.

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

This recipe can be adapted with veggies and cheese changes. Vegan cheeses work well if you do not eat dairy. This is a gluten-free recipe. Any large mushrooms work for this recipe, I used portobello that has plenty of room, after you remove the stem, to hold your stuffing. Remember mushrooms have a high level of moisture, so they must not be washed with water, use a mushroom brush to clean them.

Place leftover stuffed mushrooms in the fridge for 5 to 7 days in an airtight container. Stuffed mushrooms are perfect for freezing, however, it's best to freeze them before baking. Freeze them in an airtight container for up to 3 months.

Salad

Fresh Garden Salad (Friends Rachel)

Fresh Garden Salad (Friends Rachel)

TOTAL TIME
20-30 minutes

SERVES
4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 1- 15oz can chickpeas
- 2 cups cooked bulgur wheat
- 2 cucumbers, chopped (you can peel if you wish)
- 1 Tbsp chopped mint
- 2 Tbsp chopped parsley
- 1 cup feta cheese
- ¼ cup chopped purple onions (if prefer scallions or sweet onions, increase to ½ cup)
- 1 chopped sweet red or yellow pepper (optional)
- ½ cup chopped pistachio nuts (other nuts may be substituted)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook bulgur wheat per package instructions.
2. Open chickpea can and drain well.
3. Chop all vegetables and herbs as instructed.
4. Blend all together and serve.

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

An alternate grain to bulgur is quinoa (it has more than double the protein) equally heart healthy and *especially if you are gluten intolerant, use quinoa!* Other veggies can be added as well. This recipe can be vegan by using vegan feta cheese – it's really very good and in a salad like this, it would not be noticed. Pistachio nuts can be swapped out for slivered almonds, walnuts, or seeds – your choice! There is no oil or dressing used with this salad making it lower in calories and fat. If you like, you can add a few squirts of lemon juice and seasonings to enhance the flavors – but it's not necessary! Store in an airtight container for up to one week.



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 serving

289 Calories; 5.7g Fat; 0 Cholesterol; 235mg Sodium; 28g Carbs - 5.2g Fiber - 1.8g Sugar; 7.3g Protein

Sides

- Leeks, Artichoke & Potato Pancakes with Sour Cream
- Strawberry Applesauce
- Smoked Brussel Sprouts with Roasted Chestnuts

Leeks, Artichoke & Potato Pancakes with Sour Cream

We just love potato pancakes in our home. A latke is a type of potato pancake or fritter in the Jewish tradition. This side dish is perfect for the Jewish holiday Chanukah, celebrations, or for a meal with a salad. They are vegetarian and can be modified to be vegan. Served with sour cream or my favorite Strawberry Applesauce (recipe included).

TOTAL TIME
45-60 minutes

SERVES
12

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ pounds yellow potatoes
- 1 9-ounce package frozen artichoke hearts, thawed, diced & patted dry or canned
- ⅔ cup chopped leeks (white and pale green parts only)
- ½ cup freshly grated parmesan cheese (or non-dairy cheese may be used)
- 1 large egg, beaten to blend ('Just Eggs' substitute if you do not eat eggs)
- 2 Tbsp mint
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 6 ounces feta cheese, diced (non-dairy or regular)
- 1 ½ cups (about) breadcrumbs (gluten free if you are intolerant – Ian's Brand are free from all allergens)
- 8 Tbsp (about) olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook potatoes in a pot of boiling salted water until just tender, about 20 minutes. Drain. Cool completely and peel.
2. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Place the baking sheet in the oven. Using a hand grater, coarsely grate potatoes into a large bowl. Add artichokes and leeks.
3. Mix parmesan, egg, mint, oregano, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Add to potato mixture.
4. Stir in feta and enough breadcrumbs to form a mixture that holds together. Firmly press ½ cup mixture into 3 ½-inch round. Repeat with remaining mixture.
5. Heat 6 Tbsp oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
6. Place 4 pancakes into the skillet. Cook until brown, about 6 minutes per side. Transfer to sheet in oven. Repeat with remaining pancakes, adding more oil to the skillet by tablespoonfuls as necessary. Serve hot.

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

These pancakes can be vegan and gluten free. I use 'Just Eggs' brand for egg replacement and Ian's Panko breadcrumbs that are allergen free. The rest of the ingredients are all healthy and fresh. If you are short on time, you can buy the pre-shredded potatoes, then add all the other ingredients. Add sour cream & strawberry applesauce.



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 pancake

254 Calories; 9.4g Fat; 0mg Cholesterol; 483.5mg Sodium; 29.7g Total Carbs - 2.5g Fiber - 0.9g Sugars; 3g Protein

Strawberry Applesauce

Applesauce may often be forgotten as a side or snack. There are many varieties of apples and therefore tastes may vary. Additionally, there are options of fruits that can be added based on your tastes as well as spices other than or in addition to cinnamon such as nutmeg or allspice. My mother-in-law used to add plums and strawberries to her apples when cooking applesauce. Be creative!

PREP TIME
20 minutes

COOK TIME
25 minutes

TOTAL TIME
45 minutes

SERVES
6

INGREDIENTS

- 4-6 medium organic apples cored and cut in chunks
- 8-10 oz pkg organic frozen whole strawberries
- ½ cup water
- 1-2 tsp lite agave sweetener or to taste
- 2 Tbsp orange juice (optional)
- 2 tsp cinnamon or to taste
- walnuts or almonds (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash, core and cut apples into chunks. I leave the skin on, but you may remove when you are preparing the apples if you wish.
2. Pour the water in a medium pan and bring to a boil. Throw the apples in and when it begins to boil again, reduce the heat, cover, and let cook. Check often and stir.
3. When the apples are almost done, add strawberries and continue to cook covered for 6-8 minutes until all fruits are soft and well blended.
4. Add agave (or your choice of sweetener) and spices then stir well into applesauce.
5. Remove from heat and keep covered so the agave and cinnamon can be absorbed and blended with the fruits.
6. Refrigerate once cooled. Enjoy!

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

For this easy to make recipe, I used Braeburn apples. Honey Crisp apples are also good, sweet and delicious. You can use fresh strawberries or other berries as well to add flavor and variety. Add nuts on the top when serving with a little extra cinnamon.

Skin or not to skin? I always include the skin when I cook a recipe with apples because of the nutritional value. The skin is loaded with it! The skin of one apples contains 5 mg of fiber, 13 milligrams of calcium, 239 milligrams of potassium, and 10 milligrams of Vitamin C. The skin is not to be missed with all that nutrition, that is why I only buy organic fruits and vegetables, so I do not have to worry about harmful pesticide residue. If you are not aware of these "dirty" fruits and veggies, check out the following article of the top 10 dirty fruits and vegetables.



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 serving

109 Calories; .5g Fat; 0mg Cholesterol; 2.6mg Sodium; 31g Carbs - 5.8g Fiber - 22.7g Sugar; 1g Protein

Smoked Brussel Sprouts with Roasted Chestnuts

This provides a tasty and special combination of flavors that when blended make a super satisfying side dish for any holiday menu. Don't worry about the bacon ingredient ... I do not eat bacon so have lots of suggestions to get the same smoky flavors without the fat or calories.

TOTAL TIME
15-20 minutes

SERVES
4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb Brussel sprouts, halved lengthwise
- 2 slices thick-cut bacon, cut into 1/4-inch (4 ounces) or plant-based bacon or bacon seasoning (see below)
- 20 vacuum-packed, peeled, whole chestnuts, thinly sliced
- Olive oil
- Garlic powder
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup vegetable broth

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Wash and prepare Brussel sprouts – trim ends, slice lengthwise.
3. Using a sheet pan, cover with parchment paper and spray with a light coat of oil.
4. Layer Brussel sprouts on the pan, drizzle with oil and season.
5. Roast for 20 to 30 minutes.
6. *If you are adding bacon* – in a large deep skillet, cook the bacon of your choice over moderate heat until crisp, about 5 minutes. add the Brussel sprouts and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until well mixed. Add the chestnuts and season with salt and pepper. Add the veggie broth, simmer until heated through, and serve.

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

This recipe can be made vegetarian and vegan. Utilize plant-based bacon, as I did or for that smokey bacon flavoring, sprinkle on seasoning with a great bacon flavor such as Delicieux Bacon Seasoning or PigOut Pigless bacon seasoning, both gluten free.

I used vacuum-packed chestnuts, but if you prefer to roast fresh chestnuts instead, here is how:

- Cut a slit in the shell of each chestnut with a serrated knife.
- Roast the chestnuts in a cast iron skillet (or on a sheet pan) in a 400° oven for 20 minutes or until tender. The shell will start to curl.
- Peel them as soon as they are cool enough to handle. If you have difficulty peeling them, reheat them for 5 minutes to further loosen their skins.



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 serving

141 Calories; 6.5g Fat; 2.9mg Cholesterol; 126.7mg Sodium; 18.4g Carbs - 4.2g Fiber - 4.5g Sugars; 4.9g Protein

Main Entree

Veggie, Potato & Cheese Wellington (Add Chicken or Salmon)

Veggie, Potato & Cheese Wellington (Add Chicken or Salmon)

I love this recipe! Very flavorful. It takes a little more time to prepare, but it is worth the effort.

I use already-prepared puff pastry.

PREP TIME
10 minutes

COOK TIME
50-60 minutes

TOTAL TIME
1 hour 10 minutes

SERVES
4

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large portobello mushrooms stalks, trimmed, cleaned, and sliced
- 3 large onions peeled and chopped
- 4 medium gold potatoes, sliced and pan roasted
- 4-6 oz of shredded cheddar cheese (non-dairy or regular)
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 10.5 oz baby spinach
- 4 sprigs of thyme (optional)
- 1 pkg vegan puff pastry - Athens Phyllo dough is the brand I use
- 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard or other mustard to your taste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Everything but the Bagel Seasoning (optional) to sprinkle on top
- Thinly sliced grilled chicken or salmon, added to layers in the puff pastry if desired

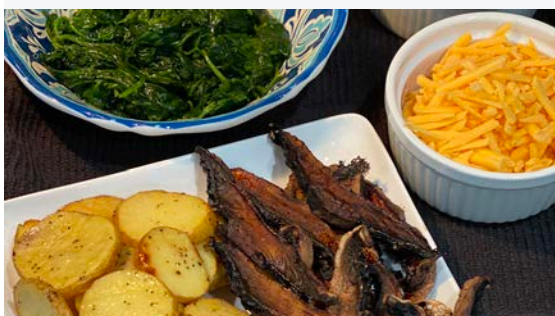
INSTRUCTIONS

Egg Wash

If you eat eggs, whisk an egg and use the egg wash over the top prior to baking. Just Eggs is a plant-based substitute. I use this to brush over the top, then sprinkle with Everything but the Bagel seasoning.

Instructions:

1. Turn the oven on to 400 degrees, slice the potatoes, spray pan & potatoes with olive oil, cook until nicely brown on both sides (~10-15 min. per side).
2. Place a large frying pan over low to medium-low heat. Add the ½ tablespoon of olive oil followed by the onions and reduce heat to low. Season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15 to 20 minutes, until the onions are golden brown. Keep an eye on the onions to make sure they don't catch.
3. Remove the onions from the pan and return the pan to the heat. Add the baby spinach and cook until wilted. Remove the baby spinach from the pan and leave to cool.
4. Increase the heat to medium-high and return the pan to the heat. Add the remaining olive oil and place the sliced mushrooms in the pan, top-side down. Cook until lightly golden (about 5 minutes) before flipping and cooking for another 5 minutes or until golden. Remove from the heat and drain on a paper towel top-side up. They will release a lot of liquid as they cool. Transfer the onions, spinach, and mushrooms to the refrigerator and cool completely.



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 stuffed mushroom

517 Calories; 45g Carbs - 8g Sugar - 6g Fiber; 35g Fat; 272mg Sodium; 926mg Potassium; 10g Protein

5. Preheat the oven to 390 degrees. Place a sheet of baking paper on the baking tray and then place the puff pastry sheet on top. (Using 5-6 sheets of frozen phyllo dough, lay across the pan).
 - a. Spread half the caramelized onions over the middle third of the pastry, making sure to leave an extra 2cm (³/₄ inch) border at the edge of the pastry.
 - b. Top with half of the baby spinach.
 - c. Layer the potatoes across the spinach.
 - d. Spread the mustard over the potatoes and season well with salt and pepper.
 - e. Sprinkle the shredded cheese on top of the mustard.
 - f. Place the mushrooms on top of the cheese/potatoes.
 - g. If you are adding grilled chicken strips, you can layer here.
6. Very carefully, roll the pastry over the top of the layer mixture until you have a log. Press down to seal the edges. Roll the log over so that the seam is facing the bottom.
7. Prepare the egg wash. Very lightly coat with egg wash. Place the pastry in the freezer for 10 minutes before repeating with another layer of vegan egg wash and freezing the pastry for a further 10 minutes.
8. Place the pastry back on the baking sheet and place in the oven for 30 to 35 minutes or until golden and flaky.

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

Wellington is best eaten as soon as it comes out of the oven as the pastry will start to soften. I have added pre-baked sliced potatoes to this recipe. Roast then add to the layering in the puff pastry. Baking time does not change. This offers a meatier vegan Wellington! For the vegan egg wash, I have brushed "Just Eggs" over the top, and it makes a nice coat. The thinly sliced grilled chicken may be added to the pastry roll. If you want to add salmon, I suggest you add it on the side when serving.



Bread

Easy Cheese & Herb Biscuits (or rolls)

Easy Cheese & Herb Biscuits (or rolls)

I love a great biscuit ... you can always go the easy way with a Bisquick boxed brand, as I did with this recipe. As the overall menu has such variety, this easy biscuit recipe is fun and inspired from a cheese bread recipe I made early in my baking career ... easy to prepare and delicious! This is a great addition to our holiday menu that you will be sure to enjoy.

PREP TIME
6 minutes

COOK TIME
7-9 minutes

TOTAL TIME
15 minutes

SERVES
8

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups Heart Health Smart Bisquick Mix
- 1 ¼ cup almond milk unsweetened, plain
- 1 egg (or 3 Tbsp of Just Eggs if you do not eat eggs)
- 2 Tbsp herbs of your choice – examples are basil, thyme, parsley, rosemary, dill, and oregano
- ½ Tbsp garlic
- ½ cup of shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter vegan (I use Earth Balance) or regular

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 450°F (232°C).
2. In a large mixing bowl, place the Bisquick.
3. Add the milk and butter slowly into the Bisquick flour and blend well.
4. After all is blended, add the egg.
5. Add herbs and cheese into the mixture.
6. Form into a 1-inch-thick dollop of dough, handling it as little as possible.
7. Place biscuits on a baking sheet in two rows, making sure they just touch – this will help them rise uniformly – you should have 7-8.
8. Brush the tops with a bit more of melted non-dairy butter and gently press a small divot in the center using two fingers. This will also help them rise evenly, so the middle won't form a dome.



MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

These are moist, delicious, and easy to whip up! I added dill and oregano along with the cheese.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 Biscuit*

170 Calories; 25g Carbs - 1g Fiber - 3.4g Sugar; 3.4g Protein; 6g Fat; 1.8g Saturated Fat; 0g Trans Fat; 0mg Cholesterol
*Nutrition information is a rough estimate due to inconsistency of sizes

Desserts

- Fruit and Nut Board
- Pumpkin Spice Donuts

Fruit and Nut Board - Use Your Creativity!

TOTAL TIME
10-15 minutes

SERVES
6-8

INGREDIENTS

The fruit and nut board can include any items you would like to add.

Dried Fruits

- Medjool dates
- Dried blueberries
- Dried cranberries
- Dried tangerines
- Dried pineapple
- Dried apples

Nuts

- Walnuts
- Pecans
- Almonds
- Pistachios

Additional ideas to include ...

- Dark chocolate almonds
- Dark chocolate coffee beans
- Pumpkin spice covered pretzels

INSTRUCTIONS

Find a wooden board or flat serving tray to design your fruit and nut dessert. No rules regarding amounts to use, it's all up to you!

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

See my fruit and nut board to get an idea of how to construct it! I found these delicious pumpkin spice covered pretzels and dark chocolate covered coffee beans and almonds ... Yummy! Just an example or guide. Have fun designing!



NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Difficult to determine as it is based on what you put on your board. Keep in mind dried fruit & nuts are good for you in moderation.

Pumpkin Spice Donuts

PREP TIME
25 minutes

COOK TIME
12-15 minutes

TOTAL TIME
40 minutes

SERVES
10

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup non-dairy milk; almond or soy
- ⅓ cup pumpkin purée
- 4 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp active yeast
- 2 Tbsp safflower or refined coconut oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp pumpkin spice
- Nutmeg and/or cinnamon to taste

Dry Ingredients:

- ¾ cup unbleached all-purpose flour + 1 to 2 Tbsp more if needed
- 2 Tbsp almond flour or use 1 more Tbsp of flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt

Cinnamon Sugar:

- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 Tbsp of granulated cane sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Grease the donut pan if not silicone or non-stick coated.
2. Warm the non-dairy milk until hot.
3. Mix the rest of the ingredients, except the yeast, and mix until sugar is combined.
4. Add yeast and mix in.
5. In a bowl, mix flour and rest of the dry ingredients. Add flour mix to the pumpkin mixture.
6. Let mixture sit for 10-15 minutes.
7. Spoon into the donut pan.
8. Let the pan sit for another 10 minutes for the batter to rise.
9. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
10. Bake for 11-12 minutes.
11. Cool for another 5 minutes, then remove from the pan.
12. Add cinnamon & sugar in a small plastic bag. Take the warm donuts, add to the sugar mixture, and shake to cover the donuts.

MELISSA'S MODIFICATIONS

Pumpkin donuts are easy to make and fun to bring kids or grandkids in the mix! These can be brushed with a little oil and then dipped in the cinnamon and sugar mixture. Delicious to dip in after-dinner coffee!



NUTRITIONAL VALUE | 1 serving

107 Calories; 3.5g Fat; 0mg Cholesterol; 9.9mg Sodium; 16.6g Carbs - 1.7g Fiber - 8.6g Sugar; 2g Protein

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MELISSA C. BERNSTEIN is a former occupational therapist and a certified chef devoted to eating healthy and teaching others how to do the same. She is a graduate of Boston University Sargent College and has over 35 years of clinician and consulting experience. During that time, her focus was occupational therapy and geriatric rehabilitation management in longterm care, assisted living, home health, and outpatient settings.

In 2010, Melissa began collaborating with her husband, Dr. David Bernstein. Together, they motivate and educate others about strategies to improve and sustain good health. After becoming a certified chef in 2019, Melissa began developing recipes to go along with Dr. Bernstein's Power of 5 formula recommendations. All recipes contain Melissa's modifications to make it easy to pursue greater health through tasty food.