



VEGAN FOR THE HOLIDAYS

CELEBRATION FEASTS
for THANKSGIVING
through NEW YEAR'S DAY

ZEL ALLEN

Contents

	Dedication	IV
	Acknowledgments	V
	Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1	Thanksgiving Gone Deliciously Vegan	5
CHAPTER 2	Christmas Spirit Is in the Air	41
CHAPTER 3	Hanukkah: A Celebration of Lights, Latkes, and Dreidels	75
CHAPTER 4	Reflections on a Vegan Kwanzaa	95
CHAPTER 5	Happy New Year Soup and Chili Bash	109
	Glossary	137
	Index	141
	About the Author	159

Introduction

WITH AN IDEA SIMMERING IN THE BACK OF MY MIND FOR SOME TIME NOW, I feel this is the right time to bring it to a boil, finish it off, plate it, garnish the platter, and present it at the holiday table. Braising, roasting, and sautéing in my kitchen is an abundant crop of indulgent recipes harvested just for the holidays. While many of us take pleasure in cooking throughout the year, we know the holiday season is that special time when those who seldom cook a meal from scratch will haul out the chopping block, mash some potatoes, and consult the family about vegetable preferences.

These past four years, I've poked a spatula into every nook and cranny of my kitchen, gleaning ideas to infuse plenty of spice into those special festive meals when people come together with friends and family to celebrate the holidays.

My aim is to offer vegan holiday foods that are just as delicious, innovative, and elegant as their hallowed meat-based counterparts. Holiday dishes for the festive vegan table center on fresh foods harvested from nature and prepared from scratch and are far more healthful and lower in saturated fat than traditional fare.

Because my family and I share the holidays with friends and other family members who are not vegan or who may have only rarely tasted festive dishes without animal ingredients, I want to provide celebration foods anyone would be proud to serve. And because the eyes are the first to experience the feast, I unleash the usual boundaries and think extravagantly: A holiday meal doesn't have to cost more; it simply has to look that way. Imagine the praise when serving a lavish-looking dish that makes everyone inhale audibly and exclaim with sounds of delight.

Fresh from the oven to the Thanksgiving table are some delectable, hearty, and innovative entrées, such as the picturesque, voluptuous wild rice, vegetable and nut-filled Thanksgiving Phyllo Pie, along with a lavish feast of cranberry appetizers, side dishes, and even beverages.

For Thanksgiving, I'd originally planned to include a recipe for mashed potatoes, but then I shed that idea because most people already know how to prepare them. Then I had second thoughts and included it with the Thanksgiving side dishes we simply cannot leave behind. To offer a truly memorable stuffing,

I prepared a pot of wild rice, combined it with shiitake mushrooms, pecans, and the perfect balance of seasonings to bring a bountiful bowl of Savory Sourdough and Wild Rice Stuffing to the table.

Dessert is that richly spiced old standby, Williamsburg “Pumpkin” Pie, along with Apples ’n’ Cream Pie. Fondly, we can join together to raise cups of silky smooth Pumpkin-Apple Nog to end the meal with a toast.

While some choose to celebrate Christmas with simple, everyday comfort foods, I’ve adopted the philosophy that celebration foods ought to stand apart from our day-to-day fare. Holidays are distinguished from ordinary days and beg for foods infused with novel touches, such as Pear and Butternut Bisque with Cranberry-Pear Compote. I still bring the leafy greens to the table but with dazzling touches like those featured in the Spinach Salad with Beets and Pomegranates, brazenly decked out in bold Christmas colors and served with a knockout Cranberry-Pomegranate Dressing.

Jewish holidays are emphatically centered on food, and Hanukkah is no exception. I couldn’t resist stirring up a kettle of Sweet and Sour Cabbage Borscht, a time-honored Eastern European soup that makes a delicious starter. To accompany the traditional Potato Latkes with Tofu Sour Cream and Applesauce, I’ve included Carrot and Sweet Potato Tzimmes. Another memorable sweet, the Cranberry Apple Strudel, is still the revered, old-fashioned dessert from Eastern Europe made even more irresistible by its twenty-first century makeover.

Kwanzaa, a recently created holiday, honors the ancient roots of the African-American culture and celebrates the weeklong holiday with special rituals and symbolic items. Eventually, each day’s special ritual leads everyone to the table for a delicious meal. I hope you’ll take part in exploring the traditional African-American foods such as Sweet Potato Pie with Cashew-Ginger Crème, Southern Cornbread, Mustard Greens with Tempeh Bacon, and a host of delicious pumpkin dishes.

I feel grateful for the rich bounty sown and harvested by our American farmers, who have enabled us to celebrate with an abundance of fresh foods.

Whether I've thrown a New Year's Eve bash with a lavish spread of great-tasting finger foods or welcomed in the new year with an open-house, soup-and-chili party, I always find the guests mingling at the table and sampling everything edible. And if, by chance, they leave the table briefly to chat with a friend, I see them returning to taste one more tidbit of New Year Log in Spicy Pecan Gremolata or dip their spoons into the thick and creamy Sweet Potato Soup.

So, I would like to welcome you to a season of jubilant celebrations, complete with irresistible vegan dishes that reflect the beautiful bounty of harvest foods—the creamy squash and pumpkins, tart cranberries, sweet persimmons, juicy pomegranates, freshly cooked chestnuts, crunchy nuts, earthy wild rice, and the herbs and spices that are inseparable from the season. In the pages of this volume, you'll find a banquet of irresistible heritage dishes—some dating back to earlier centuries—innovatively updated with novel touches.

While my focus has been solely on the foods that grace the holiday table, I'm fully aware the holidays came about to mark meaningful events of historical or religious nature. But, after all the hustle and bustle of party planning, gift shopping, gift wrapping, addressing cards, and attending holiday rituals and ceremonies, it all boils down to gathering with friends and loved ones and enjoying a fabulous meal of simple comfort foods or elegant gourmet creations. Food, after all, is a powerful bonding agent that seals warm memories of cherished occasions.

My hope is to bring grace and elegance to the table and establish new holiday food traditions with a compassionate focus that vegans can enjoy with guilt-free gusto.

As I sit down to plan my own family holiday dinners, I feel grateful for the rich bounty sown and harvested by our American farmers, who have enabled us to celebrate with an abundance of fresh foods. And it gives me deep pleasure to invite you to join me in the kitchen throughout the season, as together we participate in fun celebrations and conclude each event with a darned good meal. And now, let's bring on the holiday feasts!



CHAPTER 2

Christmas Spirit Is in the Air



AS I WAS THINKING AHEAD TO CHRISTMAS, I could almost see the brilliant colors, hear the joyful sounds, and whiff the spicy aromas that entwine the holiday. Christmas, I thought, more than any other holiday of the year, is bigger and grander in every way. Friends, family, and neighbors talk of almost nothing but decorating the Christmas tree, wrapping presents, baking holiday cookies, and squeezing in enough time to buy all the gifts on the Christmas list. Each year as Thanksgiving passes, the excitement and anticipation of Christmas totally envelops me.

Christmas is that time of year that allows us all to express joy in so many ways, especially the joy of sharing so much with those we treasure.

Some of my favorite joys of the season include inviting friends for dinner and treating them to mouth-watering dishes. Seeing the big smiles on friends' faces and hearing their sounds of pleasure with the first bite is my ultimate reward. Food has a sweet way of bringing people together like nothing else can.

Nonvegetarians dining at my table are always amazed at the copious array of foods, the savory flavors, and the lavish presentation, all brought together in a delicious vegan meal. And I see they cannot help but catch the spirit of a luxurious vegan celebration.



CHAPTER 3

Hanukkah: A Celebration of Lights, Latkes, and Dreidels



HANUKKAH, THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, is a joyful holiday that commemorates a miraculous event that occurred in ancient Jerusalem in 165 BCE, when the Jews, led by a revered leader named Judah Maccabee, chased the Syrian army out of Jerusalem and regained possession of their temple.

They searched through the ruins for the holy olive oil to relight their eternal light that, to this day, hangs above the altar in every Jewish temple. Fortunately, they found a small bottle of consecrated oil, but there was only enough to last a single day. Miraculously, that single little bottle of oil burned for eight days. Judah Maccabee proclaimed a special eight-day festival to commemorate the miracle of the lights and called it Hanukkah, meaning “dedication.”

The traditional Hanukkah celebration begins with the lighting of a nine-candle menorah. Eight of the candles represent the eight miraculous days the little vial of oil burned in the ancient temple. The ninth candle, the *shamash*, is used to light the other eight. On the first night, the shamash lights one candle. On the second night, the shamash lights two candles, and so on, until, on the eighth night, all the candles are burning.

To celebrate this holiday, many families exchange gifts all eight nights. Each year, families retell the story of Hanukkah, sing songs, and play the dreidel game with a special spinning top.

The unwritten yet traditional Hanukkah menu almost always includes foods fried in oil in remembrance of the miracle.

CHAPTER 4

.....

Reflections on a Vegan Kwanzaa



THE KWANZAA HOLIDAY PAYS HOMAGE TO AFRICAN HERITAGE, CULTURE, AND TRADITION. Reflecting on their history, African-Americans recall how their ancestors were torn from their homeland during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, packed into crude, crowded vessels and shipped to the United States, the Caribbean, and parts of Latin America to work as slaves on plantations. Divorced from their families, their homes, and their traditions, the Africans lost their cultural identity. The traumatic experience also deprived them of their feelings of community and pride.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chairman of the Department of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach, noting how African-Americans still struggle to find acceptance within the American melting pot, recognized the need for a holiday that could bring them together to celebrate their heritage. In 1966, he created Kwanzaa, a celebration that encourages reflection, builds pride and joy, and creates a sense of community that honors African-American ancestry.

The celebration and its rituals are designed to fulfill the social and spiritual needs of African-Americans. While still a new tradition, Kwanzaa, which means “first fruits” in Swahili, is spreading to the diaspora of African peoples living in Latin America, the United States, and throughout the world.

While the Kwanzaa celebration, from December 26 to January 1, includes joyful gatherings and some gift-giving, the holiday was conceived to set aside this special time for families and friends to come together and reflect on community, culture, and family.



Happy New Year Soup and Chili Bash



WHETHER MY NEW YEAR CELEBRATION BIDS FAREWELL TO THE “OLD” YEAR on New Year’s Eve or welcomes in the “new” year on New Year’s Day, I can bet the celebrants will be in a festive mood and ready for some tasty bites and zesty beverages.

Because many friends enjoy going out to dinner before the party, I plan to start the New Year’s Eve gatherings on the late side, making for a perfect evening of nibbling on finger foods. And, of course, I provide plenty of party beverages for toasting. For the earlier crowd, a more substantial meal might include informal, make-ahead foods with a couple of salad dishes to round out the meal. Something sweet and a hot beverage guarantee a warm and happy conclusion to the festivities.

I am always mindful of the football fans who won’t want to miss that exciting moment when their team scores a touchdown. Simple foods, such as bread and soup or chili, allow them to enjoy the festivities while glued to the TV, so two or three weeks in advance, I make a few breads, freeze them, and defrost them the night before the gathering. Then I make sure there are two giant stockpots of deliciously robust soups simmering on the stove at my open house.

I recognize today’s busy lifestyles leave many of us little time to spend preparing complicated dishes, so I always welcome easy preps and am grateful when guests offer to bring “a little something.” I consider it a blessing and accept it graciously.

And when the last guest says goodbye, I reflect on the old year, bid my personal farewell, and then look ahead with hope for a great new year.





HOLIDAYS INSPIRE EVERYONE TO COOK, EVEN PEOPLE WHO RARELY STEP INTO THE KITCHEN.

Who doesn't look forward to special festive meals when joining with friends and family to celebrate?

Vegan cooking expert Zel Allen demonstrates that plant-based holiday foods are as delicious, innovative, and elegant as their hallowed meat-based counterparts. Taking readers on a tour of winter holidays, Zel provides a banquet of recipes for irresistible dishes steeped in heritage and tradition, innovatively updated with novel touches.

Vegan for the Holidays covers all the details any holiday cook requires to create the perfect celebration. From assembling a party menu to planning a multicourse feast, you'll get ideas for establishing modern, more healthful food traditions with a compassionate focus that your guests can enjoy with guilt-free gusto.



"Zel's imaginative recipes bring elegance and flavor to the festive table. *Vegan for the Holidays*, with its delicious creations all garnished to the max, makes Thanksgiving through New Year's joyfully memorable. This is the go-to holiday cookbook not only for savvy vegans, but also for everyone with a desire to eat healthier."

— **Rory Freedman**, author of *Skinny Bitch*, *Skinny Bitch in the Kitch*, and *Skinny Bastard*

"Fabulously festive, Zel's recipes add a pleasant and surprisingly broad array of flavors and creativity to the typical holiday fare. With her intensive attention to detail and healthy decadence, she will enrich your celebrations with this plethora of delicious and highly nutritious possibilities!"

— **Julieanna Hever**, MS, RD, CPT; author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Plant-Based Nutrition*

"As a longtime fan of vegan celebration occasions, I just adore Zel's brilliant focus on the winter holidays. With *Vegan for the Holidays*, you'll have years' worth of inspiring recipes right at hand, all in her warm and inviting style."

— **Nava Atlas**, author of *Vegan Holiday Kitchen* and *Wild About Greens*

"An exceptional banquet of cholesterol-free, whole-foods vegan dishes created for grand dining during the holiday season makes this an outstanding cookbook everyone can appreciate."

— **Hans Diehl**, DrHSc, MPH, FACN; clinical director, Lifestyle Medicine Institute, Loma Linda, CA;
author of *Health Power: Healthy by Choice, Not by Chance*

"*Vegan for the Holidays* is a treasure-trove of creative, delicious, and seasonal recipes. With this book in hand, there's no reason to hesitate to invite even the most confirmed meat eaters for holiday feasts."

— **Reed Mangels**, PhD, RD; nutrition editor, *Vegetarian Journal*; co-author of *Simply Vegan* and *Vegan & Vegetarian FAQ*.

Zel Allen partners with her husband Reuben to publish *Vegetarians in Paradise*, a popular online vegetarian magazine that spotlights Zel's humorous illustrations and innovative recipes. She is also author of *The Nut Gourmet* cookbook and has contributed travel and food articles in *Vegetarian Journal*.

Book Publishing Company
978-1-57067-284-2

\$19.95 US ■ \$23.95 CANADA



Your purchase supports our commitment to using
postconsumer recycled paper and plant-based inks.