



# MARY'S MEMO

*Recipes • Shopping • Cooking • Health Tips*

Memo No. 2252 February 13, 2012

Chief and Rays Supermarkets

## **LISTEN UP CHOCOHOLICS!**

Several recent large-scale research reviews have provided the best evidence yet that chocolate, derived from the seeds of the cocoa tree, is good for your heart. Chocolate's health benefits are largely attributed to polyphenol compounds called flavonoids, the same family of substances that are in tea, red wine, grape juice and other plant foods which have antioxidants, anti-inflammatory and anti-clotting properties.

Chocolate may provide some heart-health benefits, especially if you eat it in place of other snacks and desserts that are high in calories and saturated fat. Choose the darkest chocolate that you like. Cocoa beans or some variation, such as cacao, chocolate liquor or cocoa mass, should be the first ingredient, not sugar.

But even if it's rich in flavonoids, think of chocolate as a treat, not a health food, because of its hefty calories. Fruits and vegetables are a better source of flavonoids on a daily basis. They have fewer calories and an abundance of vitamins and minerals, along with other healthy plant compounds and fiber. *Source: University of California at Berkeley Wellness Letter, February 2012.*

## **TAPAS**

My *Food Lover's Companion* defines tapas (TAH-pahs), popular throughout Spain, "as appetizers but they can also form an entire meal and range from simple items such as olives or cubes of ham and cheese to more elaborate preparations like cold omelets, snails in a spicy sauce, stuffed peppers and miniature sandwiches."

The tapas class that Mary Ann and I attended after Christmas at Sur La Table in Naperville, IL, featured recipes that were suitable for a tapas meal. Some of them I liked, others I didn't. By far my favorite was a vegetable stew served with garlic toasts. I had to substitute red wine vinegar for sherry vinegar (the alternative suggested in the recipe). I also cut the amount of garlic from 6 cloves to 3. Smoked paprika by McCormick® is available at Chief and Rays and on the advice of the chef that night I used half as much. Instead of treating it as an appetizer, I'm serving it as a meatless entrée.

### **VEGETABLE STEW**

- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil (I use light olive oil)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large onion, peeled and 1/4-inch diced
- 1 large red bell pepper, cored and 1/4-inch diced
- 1 large yellow bell pepper, cored and 1/4-inch diced
- 2 medium zucchini, ends trimmed and 1/4-inch diced
- (1) 28-oz. can diced tomatoes with juice

- 1 Tbsp. regular paprika
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary (1 tsp. dried)
- 2 tsp. fresh thyme (3/4 tsp. dried)
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup minced fresh parsley leaves for garnish

In medium Dutch oven, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic, onion, peppers and zucchini and stir well to combine. Cook until vegetables are softened, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add tomatoes, regular paprika, rosemary, thyme, bay leaves, smoked paprika, salt, pepper and sugar. Stir and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer stew until vegetables are very soft and stew is reduced in volume, about 25 to 30 minutes. Stir in red wine vinegar. If needed, season with additional salt and pepper to taste. Recipe makes 24 appetizer servings. Serve on toasted baguette slices. Before toasting on a cookie sheet, brush tops with olive oil and sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Toast under broiler until golden. Rub each toast with a garlic clove half.

## **VALENTINE'S DAY DESSERT**

My favorite pie is pecan and at banquets I confess to sitting where there's a slice of it. Gloria Tusko of Bryan helped me with microwave classes in the 80s and loves this week's recipe for microwave pecan pie as do I! Originally, the pie was made in a 700 watt oven while most microwaves are now 1100 watts so check at minimum time given or sooner. You can always add additional time if necessary.

### **MICROWAVE PECAN PIE**

- (1) 9-inch baked pie shell
- 1/4 cup butter (1/2 stick)
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup dark corn syrup
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp. flour
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1-1/2 cups pecan halves

Put butter in large glass mixing bowl. Microwave on high 1/2 to 1 minute to melt. Add eggs, quickly beating with a fork to mix well. Blend in corn syrup, brown sugar, flour and vanilla. Stir in pecan halves. Pour filling into baked pie crust. Microwave on 50 percent power for 9 to 12 minutes or until top is dry and puffed. If center is not completely set, it will firm up as it cools. Cut into 8 servings.