

Potluck

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New York's Culinary Institute of America, brought half a dozen stuffed yellow onions that were redolent of smoky bacon, several cheeses, herbs and breadcrumbs. His wife, artist Marcia Hales, made a light-as-air pumpkin pie topped with cutout pastry leaves and acorns and whipped cream.

Needless to say, this potluck was a culinary smash. We ate like kings and queens. But best of all, it brought good friends together to celebrate the season in the name of eating well — like family, only better.

Try these colorful, spicy recipes and see what I mean.

Veteran food critic Patty LaNoue Stearns is a member of the Association of Food Journalists, a James Beard Foundation judge and author of "Good Taste: A Guide to Northern Michigan Cuisine" and the cookbook, "Cherry Home Companion."

Roasted Vegetables

1 large zucchini
1 large yellow squash
1 each yellow and red bell pepper and Hungarian pepper, seeded, ribs removed
3 large ribs celery
10 baby carrots
1 large Bermuda onion
10 asparagus stalks
Sea salt and fresh-ground pepper
2 T. extra-virgin olive oil
1-2 T. good-quality balsamic vinegar
Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Wash and chop vegetables into bite-size pieces and toss with olive oil. Spread onto a large, shallow baking sheet in one layer, sprinkle with salt and pepper and roast for about 20 minutes, turning with a spatula every 5-10 minutes to prevent sticking. Remove from oven to a serving dish, sprinkle with the vinegar, toss and serve. Delicious hot or room temperature. Serves 4-8.

Black Bean Corn Salad

2 15-ounce cans black beans, drained and rinsed well
10 ounces cooked fresh or frozen whole kernel corn



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Potluck meals give you a chance to sample your friends' and relatives' favorite recipes.

4 baby cucumbers, peeled and diced
4 medium tomatoes, seeded and diced
1 red or yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced
4 green onions, sliced including green
1 med. jalapeno chili, seeded and diced
2 T. red wine vinegar
2 t. ground cumin
2 t. Dijon mustard
3 T. extra-virgin olive oil

2 T. chopped fresh cilantro leaves
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
In medium bowl, combine first seven ingredients.
In small bowl, mix the vinegar, cumin and mustard. Slowly whisk in the olive oil until well blended. Pour dressing over the bean mixture, stir in cilantro and season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour. To serve, bring to room temperature.
Makes 8 servings.

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