

Polenta, Tofu, and Vegetable Quiche

(from *The Millennium Cookbook: Extraordinary Vegetarian Cuisine*, by Eric Tucker & John Westerdahl, *Dessert Recipes* by Sascha Weiss)

Many people choose not to use eggs in their diet. About 70 percent of the calories in eggs are from fat, and a large portion of that fat is saturated. Eggs are also loaded with cholesterol—about 213 milligrams for an average-sized egg. Because eggshells are fragile and porous, and conditions on egg farms are crowded, eggs are the perfect host to salmonella—the bacteria that is the leading cause of food poisoning in the United States. We not only improve our own health when we kick the egg habit; we also spare many, many hens from unspeakable suffering. Over 95% of the layer hens in this country are packed in cages with floor-space the size of a record cover, 5 hens to a cage. The intense confinement for these debeaked birds is so bad that they can't even stretch their wings for the entirety of the twelve months that they are kept this way before being sent to slaughter. Since each factory farmed hen produces an average of 250 eggs over her year of laying, each egg represents 35 hours of a miserable existence.

This recipe for eggless quiche comes from the menu of the trailblazing San Francisco-based 5-star gourmet vegetarian restaurant, Millennium. A hearty layered torte, this item is a popular addition to any brunch menu.

Polenta:

- 4 cups water
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 cup polenta
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon minced fresh rosemary

Tofu-Vegetable Filling:

- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 bunch basil, stemmed
- 2 Tablespoons light miso
- 1 ½ pounds firm tofu, finely crumbled
- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons nutritional yeast
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 leeks, washed well and cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons olive oil (or 3 Tablespoons vegetable stock)
- 8 ounces button mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 zucchini, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper

1 tomato, thinly sliced

Chopped fresh herbs, such as oregano, parsley, basil, tarragon, and rosemary

½ cup fresh bread crumbs (optional)

To make the polenta:

In a medium heavy pot, bring the water to a boil and add the salt. Gradually whisk in the polenta. Reduce heat to low, add the oregano and rosemary, and whisk for 5 minutes. Cook the polenta for another 10 minutes, or until it pulls away from the sides of the pot. Pour the polenta into an 8-inch square baking dish and smooth the top. Let cool.

To make the filling:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. In a large bowl, combine the garlic, basil, miso, tofu, vinegar, yeast, and nutmeg. Transfer half the mixture to a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Return the puree to the bowl and set aside.

In a large skillet, saute the leeks and garlic in the olive oil over medium heat until the leeks are just wilted, about 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and zucchini and saute until the vegetables are soft and the liquid has evaporated. Add the salt and pepper and remove from heat. Add the tofu mixture and stir well. Spread this mixture on the polenta in the baking dish.

Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 20 minutes. Remove the foil and top with tomato slices, herbs, and bread crumbs. Bake, uncovered, for 20 minutes, or until the top is lightly browned and the filling is firm. Let cool for 15 minutes to set the filling before serving.

23 grams protein per serving!