

IDEAS FOR TAKING YOUR SOLAR COOKING "BEYOND RICE" or "KICKING IT UP A NOTCH"

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Grains: quinoa, farrow, barley, rice (all types), steel cut oats, wheat berries, etc. In general, two parts liquid to one part grain. Some take a long time with a conventional stove, so prepare ahead in a solar oven, and re-heat as needed.

Grain salad: using a cooled, cooked grain such as quinoa, add olive oil, lots of lemon juice, cucumber, tomatoes, parsley, pitted greek olives, salt and pepper.

Vegetables such as: green beans, summer squashes, drizzle with olive oil and herbs.
(no water) Note: My favorite herb mix for all recipes is made by Good Humus Organic Farm, Capay Valley (NW of Sacramento). It's called Annie Main's Sal Mesclada de Capay (a combination of Italian herbs, Flor de Sal from Portugal and toasted peppercorns).

Ratatouille: cut up fresh zucchini, onion, bell pepper, tomatoes, basil, garlic, salt, pepper and drizzle of olive oil. Cook and stir occasionally until soft, mushy and well blended.

Root Vegetables such as: beets, all kinds of potatoes, celeriac (celery root) carrots. Add a few tablespoons water to create steam. Put hot beets in ice cold water and peels slide off easily.

Potato Salad: Cut potatoes into two inch pieces or leave whole small potatoes with skins. To the same pot add several raw whole eggs in shells. No water. Cook until potatoes are tender. It's hard to predict the timing for a perfectly cooked hard-boiled egg but it's OK if the egg is a bit brown or the yolk is grayed. Put eggs quickly into ice water for easier peeling. When cool, cut up potatoes, add chopped egg, parsley, onion, celery seed, salt and pepper. Mix with vinegar and refrigerate. Add mayonnaise or sour cream to taste.

Twice-baked potatoes: Cut large baking potatoes in half horizontally. Bake until tender. Scoop out the potato from the skin leaving enough to hold its shape. Mix and mash potato with sour cream, butter, mayonnaise, parmesan cheese, seasoning, etc. The next day re-stuff the potato skins with the mixture. Sprinkle with paprika and heat.

Winter squash: any shape or size. Peel and cut up for quicker cooking with drizzle of olive oil and herbs, or leave whole and pierce with a fork to see when tender.

Dry Beans: Use any kind of dry bean including lentils, or small black beans. Cover with lots of liquid, add tomatoes, onions, garlic, chili or other spices. Add more liquid as needed. Cook all day. There are some good packaged mixtures on the market.

Split pea soup: split peas, water (about 6 parts to 1), chopped onion, celery, parsley, garlic, salt and ground pepper. Cook until tender. If you want, mix with a stick blender for a smoother result. Optional: add small pieces of ham, sausage, tofu, etc. after blending.

Whole small chicken. Fill cavity with lemon, herbs, celery, seasoning. Roast until all joints move easily.

Chicken broth: Use bones from chicken, cook with celery, parsley, onions covered with water for four hours or more. Rolling boil. Use in other recipes or as soup.

Boneless, skinless chicken thighs: Drizzle with olive oil and bake. Add canned sauces such as Progresso Basil or Trader Joe's Masala or Curry or your own. Be creative! Serve over cooked grain.

Chicken wings: cook raw wings in a teriyaki or other marinade (not too much) until done. Drain off marinade and cook some more for "browning".

Pulled Pork sliders. Cook a pork shoulder roast until meat separates easily from the fat. The next day mix the lean part with your favorite barbeque sauce and reheat. Serve on small rolls. Sweet Hawaiian rolls are traditional. Serve with solar-cooked applesauce (cook with peels-on until tender, run through food mill for smoother sauce.)

Pork baby back ribs. Cook until tender, add barbeque sauce and cook some more until the meat falls off the bones.

Beef pot roast: insert pieces of garlic into slits in the meat. Season with salt and herbs. Brown in a hot skillet or dutch oven on a conventional stove. Put the roast with wine or other liquid into a solar pot to cook until partly tender, add carrots, potatoes, onions. Cook until very tender. Transfer cooking liquid back into skillet on stove to make gravy. Shake some flour with water in a jar and whisk into the crusty bits, liquid and seasonings until it thickens.

Meat loaf and/or stuffed peppers: Use ground turkey or beef and/or grain. Mix with chopped onion, shredded carrots, tomato (sun dried in oil?), herbs and spices, bread pieces. Top with tomato catsup. Bake.

Chili Pie: make a chili mixture with beans, ground meat, tomatoes, etc. When hot, pour a slightly thinned corn bread mixture over the top and bake again until tested done.

Lasagna: Cook a ground meat and chopped onion mixture a day ahead. Layer sauce, uncooked lasagna noodles, meat, thinly sliced zucchini (also other vegetables like spinach, thin sliced carrots, peppers, mushrooms, etc.), parmesan and shredded mozzarella cheeses. Repeat. Noodles should be next to a sauce layer. For the top, thin some of the sauce with water and pour around the edges of the noodles to insure they have enough moisture to cook. Top with sliced tomatoes for more moisture and decorate with basil leaves. Bake.

Spaghetti: Heat a watered down sauce until very hot, add thin pasta (not too much) and cook until al dente.

Stuffed portabella mushrooms: Combine any grain, vegetable, ground meat, seasonings. Mound on large mushroom caps. Bake. Good use of leftovers.

Fish: trout, salmon, tilapia, etc. Put olive oil in pan under fish. Add slices of lemon, herbs, parsley, lemon juice. Bake.

Chocolate cake mix: make it more interesting by using orange juice instead of water. Add grated orange peel and/or marmalade, and chopped nuts. Put parchment paper on the bottom for easier removal. My experience has been that chocolate cakes cook better than white or yellow cakes. Hmmm, because they're dark???

Whole Orange cake: Whole oranges are cooked in some water on one day until easily pierced with a sharp knife, and used the next, blended (peel and all) with other ingredients and ground almond meal for a gluten free delight. Google the recipe. Cakes made in a dark springform pan, covered with a lid, are easier to remove from the pan

Cookies: Make a refrigerator cookie dough recipe, form into rolls, wrap in waxed paper, and slice thin as needed to bake.

I'd like to hear from you about your experiences. Linda Hayward, Sacramento CA linda14@earthlink.net