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# the next wave

five up-and-coming vegetarian chefs share their favorite recipes

*rachel merga*

*matteo silverman*





**Top vegetarian chefs** contribute to *VT* every month—and we're thrilled to make their recipes part of our magazine (and lunches!). Still, we often wonder: What's cooking in the kitchens of aspiring veg chefs? You know, the ones who are working hard, taking chances—but haven't been "discovered" yet.

To find out, we went on a talent search at the Natural Gourmet Institute in New York City (the only accredited cooking school that focuses on a plant-based diet and allows students to follow a vegetarian curriculum). We asked recent grads to show us their stuff by submitting recipes that were nutritious, delicious and, above all, easy to prepare in a home kitchen.

Although our quest may not have had the adrenaline rush of reality TV, it was pretty exciting for us to taste the latest veg sensations. Of all the participants, these five wowed us with their creativity and careful attention to nutrition. In the kitchen, they practice what they preach, serving watermelon as a savory appetizer, using dried mushrooms to add flavor, turning Israeli couscous into a main-dish risotto, adding protein-rich tempeh to potato patties and slipping avocado into chocolate mousse for a heavenly creaminess that is 100 percent vegan. These talented cooks all have their fingers on the pulse of vegetarian cuisine. And now, thanks to their recipes on the following pages, so do you.

*wendy g. ramunno*

*steven bowe*

*sabrina wu*



FOOD STYLING BY FRANK P. MELODIA PROP STYLING BY KAREN QUATSOE



### cream of lentil soup

*wendy g. ramunno*

is obsessed with creating all kinds of lentil soups, her standard comfort food. This one, inspired by her time in Spain, calls for dried shiitake mushrooms and chipotle chiles to give it a rich, smoky flavor. A longtime foodie and former political reporter, Wendy is happy she skipped law school to follow the Chef's Training Program at the Natural Gourmet.

### watermelon salad with jalapeño and lime

*matteo silverman* serves this salad as an *amuse-bouche* (a fancy term for a small hors d'oeuvre) at 4 Course Vegan, his supper club/restaurant in Brooklyn. The flavors are a mix of his native California and nearby Mexico and balance spiciness (from jalapeño peppers) with three basic tastes: sweet (watermelon), sour (lime) and salty (sea salt).





## chocolate mousse in crispy ginger curls

The art of performance and presentation is familiar to *rachel merga*, who spent 12 years as a professional ballet dancer in Germany. The native of England put those skills, along with her culinary training, to good use when creating this rich, dark mousse that gets its creamy texture from a surprise ingredient: avocado.

## tempeh and potato breakfast patties

*sabrina wu's* tempeh patties are too good to limit to breakfast—try them with fresh salsa and grated cheese for lunch and dinner as well. A graduate of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, Sabrina is passionate about supporting sustainable agriculture and working to increase low-income consumers' access to nutritious food.

## israeli couscous risotto with shiitakes

Cooking Israeli couscous like risotto is a perfect example of how *steven bowe* enjoys transforming familiar ingredients with unexpected techniques. His interest in the social history of food led him to the Natural Gourmet's Chef's Training Program after earning his bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology.





# top five ingredients

Spice, salt, savory herbs and Southwestern chiles are the tastes that currently inspire cooks around the country, including the chefs on these pages.

## ginger

This distinctive spice isn't just for Asian dishes and crunchy cookies. These days, it's paired with chocolate and fruit to give desserts a touch of the exotic—without having to invest in hard-to-find ingredients or flavorings.

## sea salt

The clean, "less salty," unrefined (and non-iodized) taste of sea salt provides the perfect finishing touch for foods. Silverman recommends Maldon Sea Salt, a widely available brand from England.

## fresh herb combos

The latest craze in aromatics is to use three or four different fresh herbs in the same dish so that the flavors play off one another and add complexity.

## chipotles in adobo

For spicy, smoky flavor, look for chipotle chiles in adobo sauce (a seasoned tomato purée) in small cans in Latin food sections of most supermarkets. One seeded, diced chile is usually enough to flavor a dish.

## poblano chiles

These deep green chiles are sweet with a touch of spicy heat. Traditionally, poblanos are roasted and peeled, but more and more chefs now use them the same way they would green bell peppers.

## CREAM OF LENTIL SOUP

Serves 8

If you like spicy foods, add up to 2 tsp. chopped chipotle chile in adobo sauce.

### Soup

- 6 dried shiitake mushrooms, divided**
- 1 tsp. olive oil**
- 1 large onion, chopped (2 cups)**
- 1½ cups lentils**
- ½ tsp. chopped chipotle chile in adobo sauce**
- ½ tsp. salt**
- ½ cup whole milk**
- 2 tsp. sherry vinegar**
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter**

### Croutons

- 1½ Tbs. olive oil**
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced**
- 3 slices sourdough bread, crusts removed, cubed**
- 1½ Tbs. chopped chives**

**1.** To make Soup: Cover mushrooms with 2 cups boiling water in bowl. Let stand 30 minutes.

Drain, and reserve liquid.

Remove and discard stems, then thinly slice caps. Set aside.

**2.** Heat oil in pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, and sauté 7 minutes, or until soft. Add lentils, chipotle, ½ cup mushrooms, reserved mushroom liquid, salt and 5 cups water. Reduce heat to medium low, and simmer, partially covered, 45 minutes. Purée in blender or food processor. Return to pot, and stir in milk, vinegar and butter.

**3.** To make Croutons: Heat oil in skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and remaining mushrooms, and cook 1 minute, or until browned and crisp. Transfer to bowl. Add bread cubes to pan, and sauté 3 minutes, or until browned. Toss croutons with mushrooms. Ladle soup into bowls and sprinkle with croutons and chives.

PER SERVING: 229 CAL; 10G PROT; 7G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 35G CARB; 6MG CHOL; 327MG SOD; 7G FIBER; 4G SUGARS



## WATERMELON SALAD WITH JALAPEÑO AND LIME

Serves 2 • Vegan • 30 minutes or less

Thanks to farmers in Texas and Arizona, sweet flavor-packed watermelons are now available year-round. Black sesame seeds add a nice color contrast to this dish, but if you can't find them, white sesame seeds work just as well.

- 3 Tbs. lime juice**
- 2 Tbs. olive or avocado oil**
- ⅛ tsp. lime zest**
- 2 cups seedless watermelon, cut into ½-inch cubes**
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and sliced**
- ¼ cup basil or Thai basil, cut into thin strips**
- 1 tsp. black sesame seeds**
- ½ tsp. sea salt**

**1.** Whisk together lime juice, oil and lime zest. Set aside.

**2.** Place watermelon cubes in single layer in large shallow dish. Pour lime juice mixture over watermelon, and gently toss to combine. Cover, and refrigerate until ready to serve.

**3.** Place 5 jalapeño rings each in 4 shallow serving bowls. Mound ½ cup watermelon in center of each bowl. Divide marinade among bowls. Sprinkle with basil, sesame seeds and salt, and serve.

PER SERVING: 181 CAL; 1G PROT; 14.5G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 14G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 402MG SOD; 1G FIBER; 10G SUGARS





## CHOCOLATE MOUSSE IN CRISPY GINGER CURLS

Serves 8 • Vegan

Look for mangoes with sweet scents and rosy colors and avoid those that have black spots or are too soft—they can be overripe and stringy.

### Chocolate Mousse

- 1 large mango, diced (1½ cups)
- 1 medium avocado, diced (¾ cup)
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 Tbs. brewed espresso or strong black coffee
- 1 Tbs. rum, optional
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips, melted

### Ginger Curls

- 2 Tbs. maple syrup
- 1 Tbs. canola oil
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- 2 8-inch flour tortillas, quartered shaved coconut and diced mango, optional

1. To make Chocolate Mousse: Blend mango, avocado, cocoa powder, coffee, rum, if using, and vanilla in food processor until smooth. Add melted chocolate, and blend until smooth. Chill 2 to 3 hours.
2. To make Ginger Curls: Preheat oven to 325F. Coat 8 muffin cups with cooking spray. Whisk together maple syrup, oil and ginger in small bowl. Brush one side of each tortilla quarter with syrup and ginger mix. Press gently into muffin tin with brushed side facing up so tortilla holds slight cup-shaped form. Bake 10 to 15 minutes, or until crisp and golden. Cool on rack.
3. Spoon mousse into curls. Top with coconut and mango, if desired.

PER SERVING: 216 CAL; 3G PROT; 11G TOTAL FAT (4.5G SAT. FAT); 29G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 14MG SOD; 4G FIBER; 15G SUGARS



## TEMPEH AND POTATO BREAKFAST PATTIES

Makes 8 patties • Vegan

Steaming tempeh helps soften the soybeans it's made of so that the protein-rich cakes absorb more flavor.

- 2 medium Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into ¼-inch cubes (about 3 cups)
- 1 8-oz. pkg. tempeh
- ⅓ cup unbleached flour
- ¼ cup chives, finely chopped
- 2 Tbs. low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 clove garlic, minced (about 1 tsp.)
- ½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- ½ tsp. chopped fresh sage
- ½ tsp. chopped fresh oregano
- 2 Tbs. olive oil

1. Cook potatoes in boiling salted water 15 minutes, or until soft. Drain and cool. Meanwhile, cut tempeh in half, and steam in steamer 20 minutes.
2. Preheat oven to 450F. Coat baking sheet with cooking spray. Pulse tempeh in food processor until coarsely ground. Transfer to large bowl, and stir in potatoes, flour, chives, soy sauce, rosemary, garlic, thyme, sage and oregano. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Shape mixture into 2-inch balls. Press into ½-inch-thick patties. Brush with olive oil, and place on prepared baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes, then brush again with olive oil, flip with spatula, and brush with olive oil. Bake 10 minutes more, or until both sides are browned.

PER PATTY: 141 CAL; 7G PROT; 7G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 15G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 211MG SOD; 1G FIBER; <1G SUGARS

## ISRAELI COUSCOUS RISOTTO WITH SHIITAKES

Serves 4 • Vegan

If you can't find Israeli couscous (a large, chewy version of regular couscous) this recipe can also be made with orzo pasta.

- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 Tbs. olive oil, divided
- 6 oz. shiitake mushrooms, sliced (about 2 cups)
- 1 poblano chile, diced (about ¼ cup)
- 2 shallots, minced (about ¼ cup)
- 1 carrot, diced (about ½ cup)
- 1 8.8-oz. box Israeli couscous



- ½ cup fresh or frozen peas
- 3 Tbs. chopped chives, plus more for garnish
- 2 Tbs. chopped tarragon

1. Bring broth and 4 cups water to a boil in saucepan. Reduce heat to low.
2. Heat 1 Tbs. oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add mushrooms and poblano, and sauté 5 minutes, or until mushrooms have released their juices. Transfer to plate, and set aside.
3. Heat remaining 1 Tbs. oil in same pan over medium heat. Add shallots, and sauté 2 minutes, or until soft. Add carrot, and sauté 3 minutes more. Add couscous, and cook 3 minutes, or until lightly browned, stirring constantly.
4. Stir ¼ cup broth mixture into couscous mixture. Reduce heat to medium low. Add ¼ cup more liquid, and cook until liquid has been absorbed. Continue adding liquid, cooking and stirring 12 minutes, or until couscous is tender and all liquid has been used. Add peas and reserved mushroom mixture, and cook 2 minutes more, or until peas are heated through. Stir in 3 Tbs. chives and tarragon, and season with salt and pepper. Serve garnished with remaining chives.

PER SERVING: 358 CAL; 10G PROT; 7G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 63G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 375MG SOD; 5G FIBER; 6G SUGARS