

Veg Mastery Program Q&A 6 with Eric Tucker. Topic: Meaty Recipes
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TREVOR: Hello, everyone. This is Trevor Justice with the Vegetarian Health Institute.

Tonight's topic is making meaty recipes from tofu, tempeh, seitan and mushrooms. And our guest expert is Eric Tucker from Millenium Restaurant in San Francisco. How are you doing, Eric?

ERIC: I'm doing pretty well.

TREVOR: Thanks for joining us.

ERIC: No problem.

TREVOR: I wrote out some questions that I'd like to ask you about the lesson on meaty recipes. The first thing is you had talked about mushrooms having a relationship to other yeast-fermented foods like soy sauce, miso and vinegar. And that somehow this yeast can add to a meaty flavor in vegetarian dishes. Can you tell us more about that?

ERIC: Mushrooms are basically from the fungi family which includes molds, yeasts and all that so that includes foods that are fermented with mold. Tempeh, which is like penicillin, soy sauces, miso, all that. They're amino acid chains for the plant kingdom are a little closer to the animal kingdom in many respects.

The ratio of say B complex vitamins, the types of amino acids. Inherently, when cooked, it has a bit more meaty quality, a real middle of the palate quality, not unlike it's sort of animal brethren. With those recipes as well as at Millenium, we use a lot of mushrooms and we use a lot of miso, tamari, soy sauces and other fermented food products.

TREVOR: It's my understanding. You gave an example that surprised me in the lesson. You took some radicchio, marinated it in olive oil and red wine vinegar and sautéed it, that it would actually have a meaty quality because of the yeast in the vinegar.

ERIC: Not so much the yeast in the vinegar per se, but also the brassica family. What we're talking about is glutamates – glutamic acid – which are found in mushrooms and also found in many vegetables. The brassica family like broccolia, broccoli, radicchios, even kales and stuff. When those vegetables a lot of times are subject to really brief direct heat, they get kind of meaty.

What I'm saying in that quick recipe is take some radicchio, toss in a little bit of olive oil, salt and pepper, red wine vinegar or balsamic vinegar, which has a little bit of sugar. Get it on some really streaming hot pan or grill and it just brings out this slightly – the best way to describe it is a meaty quality.

And that's the reaction of the heat with the glutamates and the brassica as well as the sugars and the yeast residual in same the balsamic or red wine vinegar. Or use a red wine, like Zinfandel perhaps.

TREVOR: That's really enlightening to me. I was not aware of that.

ERIC: Next time you fire up the grill, just get some radicchio when it's screaming hot. It's a wonderful thing. It really is.

TREVOR: And is this related to what you described as the Maillard Reaction.

ERIC: It kind of is. In that sense it is. It's not a protein-heavy food, but some of the Maillard Reaction is when you denature the proteins. They start to break down and they're combining with the natural sugars or added sugars. And caramelizing, which provides in meat-based cooking that's the browning of meat and stuff like that.

In the vegetable kingdom, it's what happens with taking a mushroom and high heat searing or grilling. The recipe I have for grilled oyster mushrooms. That is a classic example of that happening. So with the radicchio it's still more. Not so much the proteins, but the glutamates in the radicchio combining with the sugars and kind of doing this whatever magic that it does.

TREVOR: Now the glutamates. Are they amino acid chains?

ERIC: I believe they are amino acid, yeah.

TREVOR: So what's the effect? You mentioned in the lesson that these particular foods have the amino acid chains. Have the potential to remind us of meaty foods. When they're exposed to dry heat, the dry heat has a certain effect on them. In fact, I will just get that in front of me and quote what you said exactly.

"The glutamate family of amino acids, especially glutamic acid, are known for providing this umami flavor... The influence of heat and sugars on these amino acid chains is the key to achieving a meaty quality. It's known as **the Maillard Reaction**. It's similar to caramelization.

But as the denatured proteins caramelize, they react by binding with sugars. This process is achieved through high dry heat." Can you say more about the effect of dry heat on foods?

ERIC: Yeah. Another example is if you took some oyster mushrooms and boiled them. Even if you used a little balsamic or tamari and threw them into a pan of water and they boiled, what's going to happen is it's just going to do that. As things start to break down, it's just going to leach out into the liquid medium.

Even when you braise something, it does that. What you needed to do was hit the bottom of a really hot sauté pan or a grill with just a hair of fat and have the amino acids as they break down combine with a little marinade with tamari, which is more amino acids. And maybe a hair of balsamic.

There are natural sugars in the tamari and in the mushrooms. And having that sear onto it. Think caramelization. Just getting a good sear on something versus just boiling. I think of boiled mushrooms, I'm not too inspired. The wet noodle thing. Versus high heat searing and you get this wonderful caramelization when you get a little crisp and brownness. That's what we're talking about. The Maillard Reaction.

TREVOR: Now another thing you talked about was using ingredients like smoked dulce or smoked tea leaves or liquid smoke to add this flavor. What is liquid smoke?

ERIC: It's water that's been passed over a smoldering fire so it collects the smoke. It turns to water vapor and then it's condensed. Henceforth, it traps in some of the aerated components of the smoke. It traps the smoky flavor into that.

TREVOR: Does it have ash in there or is more just a flavor?

ERIC: It's more the flavor. It probably has traces of ash. I was looking up some websites that claim that liquid smoke is a lot cleaner and safer product than actually smoking or even cooking over a wood burning fire, and you're using. The stuff is really quite concentrated. You don't need much at all.

TREVOR: So you can get the flavor of having cooked over a wood burning fire, but without as much contaminants.

ERIC: Yes.

TREVOR: Then tell us like things like smoked dulce and smoked tea leaves. Where does one buy those types of ingredients.

ERIC: Smoke dulce is available at most of the health food stores. Smoked tea leaves. Lapsong souchong tea, which is a tea leaf that's dried over a wood burning fire. In the same concept of smoked chipotle chilies that are dried solely over a smoldering fire. It picks up that smoky essence. And you find those wherever fine teas are sold or Asian markets.

TREVOR: Let's talk about seitan for a minute. Now, it's possible to buy some seitan pre-made in the stores. But the recipe you provided will allow people to make it at home. What are the benefits of making homemade seitan.

ERIC: One, it'll be cheaper. Two, it allows you to custom tailor it, seasoning it however you want to season it. The recipe I gave was for basically combining seasonings that would be indicative of a Merguez sausage. Which is an African sausage that has things like mint and north African spices in there.

There's a little bit of wheat flavor, so it really carries whatever you combine it into. And then if you braze them in a flavorful medium, it really carries that flavor. So you can tailor it anyway you want.

Especially if you are making things that are sausage-like. Between my two cookbooks, there're a whole bunch of variations for doing curry apple sausage, Italian sausage, a couple of other variations. It's kind of the sky is the limit when it comes to that.

TREVOR: In this particular recipe. Seitan Merguez Sausage. So this one as I understand the seitan is wrapped tightly.

ERIC: Well, there's two ways to do it, depending on what texture you want to achieve.

TREVOR: Yeah, talk about that.

ERIC: One way to do it is you make your dough so it comes out in a loaf-type thing. You stick that into a baking pan, cover it with a vegetable stock that's seasoned. Get your salt ratio right for that. And you bake it off.

It comes out a little more spongy and springy and as it cools down it kind of tightens up. Then you slice it and it's wonderful if you want to achieve that softer sausage-like texture of sausage that might be not technically wrapped in a sausage casing.

If you wrapped it tightly in cheesecloth then blanched it. Cooked it fully, took off the cheesecloth. What you get is really firm slices and you can slice thin rounds and medallions. Think akin to something pepperoni-ish or salami-ish in terms of texture. You could vary your texture on that product.

TREVOR: We have a couple of questions that have come in from Lenore. The first one is where do you get the Lapsong souchong tea and how is it made.

ERIC: Again, we just chatted about that some. Asian markets or anywhere that sells fancy teas. Health food stores and fancy grocers. It's a tea leaf that's dried slowly over a smoldering fire. It picks up all the smoky nuances of that.

TREVOR: And then she also has a sort of comment question, saying seared foods are delicious, but isn't this causing acrylamides, which is something that Dr. Klaper taught us about. The answer is yes. Well, in starchy foods this is true. The question is: is the ingredient that's being smoked considered a starchy food? Because acrylamides really form in starchy foods like potatoes and breads. I wouldn't think that tea leaves qualify as a starchy food.

ERIC: No, I would not. Unfortunately, that's a little bit out of my expertise so I can't, but a tea leaf I do not consider a starchy food.

TREVOR: Right, but this is a good question, Lenore. I'll check with Dr. Klaper and see because there's a variety of things here. You could buy smoked dulse, smoked tea leaves, liquid smoke, and obviously water is not a starch.

ERIC: And smoked salt. All that kind of stuff.

TREVOR: So that's an excellent question. Do you have other tips that you'd like to share with people about making meaty recipes with seitan?

ERIC: For me personally, it's a little bit of bias. I'm not a big fan of eating large quantities of seitan. Using it once in a blue moon, but using it a lot as part of your main product where you're serving 6 ounces of wheat gluten. For me, I can usually handle bread, but that intense gluten can be a little tough on the digestive system.

Where I like to use seitan. Like that recipe I gave you where you're using small quantities, especially if you're using it sausage style and it had a lot of flavor. It kind of carries the flavor and punctuates a dish. Like maybe you're doing bean ragu and maybe you have little bits of seitan sausage throughout it.

You've got a really well-seasoned spicy seitan sausage, and it acts as a punctuation. It provides flavor and texture, but is not the centerpiece. That's one of my favorite ways to use seitan versus rather than serving a big slab of the stuff. Again, a slight bias for me. But that's what I like to do.

TREVOR: So once you make one of these seitan sausages, if you want to store it in the fridge and slice up a little bit to go in different dishes over the coming weeks. How long will it last for you in the fridge?

ERIC: In the fridge, especially if you keep it in its brazing medium and it's well salted, it's going to last over a week easily. We have a good shelf life with seitan.

TREVOR: So people could just use a little bit per day or even every other day.

ERIC: Yeah. No problem.

TREVOR: So let's talk about tempeh. You were mentioning that tempeh is a fermented food. Does that make it have more of the umami quality and flavor than tofu, for example, or wheat gluten?

ERIC: It's different. To me, it's more savory and umami than tofu. If you took plain unseasoned wheat gluten and you took plain unseasoned tempeh, and cook both of them. The tempeh would still be more umami.

Especially when you get your hands on really good quality tempeh like homemade tempeh. There are some really nice mass produced temphehs on the market. That you just salt and pepper it. Maybe boil it or throw it in the oven and let it crisp up or pan sauté it.

I find it really wonderful on something more as adornments. Because it does have that wonderful middle of the palate, sort of umami thing. In that sense, yes.

TREVOR: In that sense, yes to which question?

ERIC: In terms for my palate having more umami, savory qualities than either plain unseasoned seitan or plain tofu.

TREVOR: Okay. Because it starts out with it due to the fermentation. Tofu is really just coagulated soy milk, whereas tempeh is made from the whole soybean. It's soybeans that are fermented. So it's more of a whole food and offers more nutrition to begin with as well. We talked about how tempeh compares to seitan. How do those two compare to tofu or mushrooms as far as texture?

ERIC: They're all apples and oranges. They all have their own different qualities. Tofu. Coagulated soy milk. Really wonderful, good quality fresh tofu is most minimally. Where you use a good dashi broth or soy sauce, can be wonderful with minimal added adulterations. There are a bunch of different styles of tofu.

Some people just like that mouth feel of especially the custardy-soft tofu. Which I find really appealing. Some don't. It's a totally different world than seitan or tempeh or mushrooms. If you want to get a firmer texture, more meatier. Some of the things to do is to press the moisture out of it. Freeze your tofu. Then defrost it and the moisture comes out of it, and it gets kind of spongy.

You can do different things where you might crumble the tofu. Combine it with seasonings and bake it off. Use it, say, in something southwestern. Or broiling the tofu, which again goes back to. A sweet glaze or some soy. Which goes back to that whole Maillard Reaction and how that kind of caramelizes on top of that. I don't know if that answers your question.

TREVOR: I was intrigued when you talked about freezing the tofu to make it more spongy. How might people use that technique? What's its purpose and what does the sponginess accomplish?

ERIC: Well, in Japan, they call it snow tofu. Where it's frozen. Because I guess in a former generation, they stuck it out in the snow. It would freeze. It makes it spongy. If it's traditionally used in stews and broths where it would suck in the flavor but still keep a really chewy texture as opposed to getting really soft.

Another thing to do if you did defrost it. It does crumble easily. Then crumble it into a preparation like that.

TREVOR: With some of the other substances like mushrooms, tempeh and seitan. Are there any other tips like that for getting the main food to soak up marinades or hold onto flavors?

ERIC: Yes and no. Tempeh. A lot of times at the restaurant what we do is we bake the tempeh in a marinade. Just to give it a bit more body. Depending on the preparation. On our menu right now we have tempeh that's being glazed like with a tangerine sweet soy glaze. What we're doing is braising off the tempeh in a bit of vegetable stock and tamari with some ginger. A little bit of star anise. It pulls those flavors into the tempeh.

It requires us to use a less intense really salty marinade with that kind of glaze on it. It just brings all those elements together. Tempeh, being porous, fully accepts marinades quite well. The same applies for tofu. I think for the recipe I gave you. You sort of baste the tofu in a soy base, and it bakes onto it and creates a really nice glaze.

That's a common preparation that we do at Millenium. It firms up the texture and brings some of the moisture into the tofu. Then it seals in some flavor. And you get some caramelization from the sweetened soy-based marinade on it.

TREVOR: When you bake the tempeh, for example, in a marinade. What does that look like? What would be in the marinade. Do you totally submerge the tempeh in it?

ERIC: We do. We totally submerge it. There's a couple ways. One that's a non-Asian inspired. We'll throw some traditional Western herbs like thyme, rosemary and sage in with it and it's kind of swimming in vegetable sauce. Usually there's some soy sauce in there. Sometimes we'll even throw in some red wine.

And let it bake for about an hour and a half. Pull the tempeh out. It dries out a little bit. And then proceed from there. It picks up a real savory Western traditional flavor profile.

TREVOR: You've mentioned soy sauce a number of times. Do you have a preference between tamari or Nama Shoyu or just regular soy sauce?

ERIC: We usually use a tamari that's wheat-free just because it doesn't have the wheat in it. I like any good quality soy sauce. The market is full of them these days. Watch out for soy sauces you might get in Asian markets that have things like corn starch and food coloring.

Molasses and that. It's worth the extra dollar or whatever to get it at your health food store where you're getting a known, really good quality clean product.

TREVOR: What's the difference between tamari and Nama Shoyu?

ERIC: Nama Shoyu usually has some wheat in it. It's usually still. With tamari, the fermentation is arrested, usually with alcohol or heat. Versus Nama Shoyu which is supposed to be the most pure kind of soy sauce. Where it's cold fermented and it doesn't get heated so it's still a living culture.

We use it. It's considered respectable in many respects for folks doing raw foods. It really depends on the brand. Sometimes the Nama Shoyu can seem a little bit richer on the palate.

TREVOR: We've got a couple more questions from Lenore. First, she wants to know which brands of commercial tempeh you prefer?

ERIC: Turtle Island and an east coast brand - Life, I believe. We also use a local Wildwood. Basically those three.

TREVOR: And you mentioned getting homemade tempeh?

ERIC: Homemade tempeh. When you can find non-commercial tempeh where they don't have to arrest the culture. And add vinegar. It really. There is a difference. It's a less stable product, but it can be nuttier. Sometimes the commercial stuff has a little bit of moldy, overly fermented taste or a slight vinegar aftertaste from the vinegar they add to it to arrest the culture.

TREVOR: For people who don't live in San Francisco. Do you have any tips on if they wanted to find this homemade tempeh, where they would look?

ERIC: I don't know. I know that there are folks. Like in New York, I've been told there's folks there making tempeh. Small markets with commercial made tempehs. Search your local markets.

I'm sure in many places there are folks that are doing it and doing it as an artisan product. There are local tofu makers here in the Bay area. I know also on the east coast, it's the same with tempeh. Keep your eyes and ears peeled for that.

Check some of the smaller health food stores. Where a local producer might sell it to a smaller independent versus because they're not going to get into the big mass market whole foods or what have you.

TREVOR: So if there's a mom and pop health food store. That might be more likely to have it.

ERIC: Yes, indeed.

TREVOR: We talked about freezing tofu. I'm curious about the second recipe you gave us with gluten flour. That's the one called Pecan Black Bean Cakes with Mango Mustard. How do you pronounce the sauce?

ERIC: Mango Mustard Habanero Sauce.

TREVOR: So what you said is the gluten flour in this preparation gives the bean cakes a real toothsome-ness that you can sink your teeth into. So in effect you're making seitan. Is this somewhat different than making seitan? How is it like seitan; how is it not like seitan?

ERIC: It's like seitan. You're basically making a dough, except you're using up a far smaller ratio of gluten flour. You can do this recipe and we do it with great results if you're gluten intolerant using something like chickpea flour and/or a little bit of corn masa.

But if you want to get it even firmer using the gluten flour the way that gluten reacts and sets up. It will give you a nice chewy taste. It's just there to kind of bind and hold all this stuff in place. It's kind of a good way to utilize gluten flour without having. You know, if you want to make a center of a plate thing using a bean cake. Which to me is a lot more healthful having beans and nuts than having a big slab of wheat gluten. You can get away with using small amounts of gluten to just give it that wonderful, chewy texture.

TREVOR: So it will give you a similar mouth feel of the chewy meaty texture. But without it being so concentrated in gluten. Got it. That's a good one. Is that a recipe that you guys make at Millenium?

ERIC: It's a recipe that from time to time shows up, yeah. We're actually doing that for one of our dinners in two days where we're doing a quasi-meatball kind of thing made with walnuts and meatballs. And just enough gluten flour to kind of bind everything together.

TREVOR: How often throughout the year do you guys make this recipe?

ERIC: It's going to show up a couple times a year. We'll do something close to that. A lot of times we will do it just utilizing chick pea or corn masa in lieu of seitan because I have more gluten free options on my menu.

TREVOR: If you were just waiting for Millenium to serve this. Even if you lived in San Francisco, you might only get it twice a year. But now you've got the recipe and you can make it every week if you want to.

ERIC: There you go.

TREVOR: Let's see what else we've got. Lenore had a comment. She found a great tempeh maker through the farmers market grape vine. But she wants to know where do we get the recipes. Oh, Lenore. The recipes we're talking about are all in lesson 6 inside our password protected website.

As we mentioned over email last week, we restructured the order of some of the lessons so that even though this is a new lesson, it's where lesson 6 is. When you click on that, you'll see all the recipes we're talking about.

In fact, I'm going to get the lesson in front of me so I can ask you some more questions. All right. I'm looking at. We've got a couple of different mushroom recipes. There's one with oyster mushrooms. There's one with Portobello. What are the differences in terms of mouth feel or flavor from one type of mushroom to the next?

ERIC: It can vary greatly. Part of it is the preparation, but a lot of it is the mushroom itself. It's really. I could go into some. An amateur mycologist like myself who lives up in the hills when not working. I was just up picking morels. Morel has nothing to do with a button mushroom. Portobello. It's definitely in its own little universe and has its own unique set of textures and flavors.

Especially with the wild mushrooms. They sort of represent where they're grown from. Some of the wild mushrooms pick up notes of - can be piney as well as being earthy. There is such a diversity of flavors. It's kind of hard to go into it.

But in the Bay area in the late fall such as the Japanese matsutake mushroom up in the Sonoma Coast up along the north, the flavor's actually reminiscent. It's like cinnamon and kind of spicy and very aromatic.

Porcinis also show up in the same area. They're very earthy and meaty and the polar opposite of matsutake mushrooms. Go to the farmers market. Across the nation, most farmers markets have a vendor that sells either specialty cultivated mushrooms. And/or a lot of times wild mushrooms picked by professionals that know what they're picking. Just play around with the different textures and flavors. It's a whole universe unto itself.

TREVOR: We're waiting for more questions to come in. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about this whole topic that you haven't gotten to discuss yet on this phone call that you'd like to share.

ERIC: Again, if you look at the recipes. A lot of them like the grilled oyster mushroom recipe. It's where we're taking those grilled oyster mushrooms and adding it to some big white beans and some other ingredients and tossing with pasta. A lot of times I use these meatier products as more of an accent versus setting you down to a plate of half a pound of grilled oyster mushrooms per se.

Even the Portobello mushroom recipe. Sometimes at the restaurant, I like a big sized chunk of Portobello. But the way you can get a lot of mileage from some of these products. The recipe for the Portobellos. You slice it paper thin, put it on a crustini with a little bit of horseradish aioli. It makes a fantastic appetizer. A lot of times when I'm using the meatier preparations. I'm using it not so much as a centerpiece, but to add accent to a dish per se.

It's a pretty diverse topic in a lot of respects. It's subjective to personal flavor. Personal palette. There are folks that are actually turned off by that whole flavor and texture that are reminiscent of the animal's counterpart.

TREVOR: This lesson is obviously catering to people who are new to this diet.

ERIC: Exactly.

TREVOR: And still miss those kinds of foods. Come to think of it. One frustration that some people express when they're new to being vegetarian or vegan. Sometimes they'll say they don't feel satiated. They get hungry quickly after eating a meal because it's missing the meat or fish or chicken they're used to. Between tofu, tempeh, seitan, mushrooms. Is one a clear winner in terms of something that's going to make you feel full for hours afterwards?

ERIC: That's totally subjective. With the recipes, if you use them throughout the dish so that they permeate that wonderful grilled flavor. And it's got beans which has more of the satiating, heavier qualities to the dish. That's how a lot of that works for me.

As one who's been around vegetarian cuisine for such a long time. And around folks who are going vegetarian or vegan. Everyone seems to have their own take as to what they miss and not. I know plenty of vegans whose diets subsist of a lot of the processed fake meat-type products.

For me and a lot of folks, I'd rather eat. Give me a nice bowl of beans and I'm thoroughly content. So it's really subject to everyone's palette. But I can't really say what's going to do it. Sometimes for the folks that are transitioning off a meat-based diet.

And when you present them with the fake meat stuff or something that's supposed to mimic it. It actually is a let down because they're used to the real deal. I try to steer people at the restaurant away from those dishes. There aren't too many. There's only one dish with some seitan in it.

A lot of other things may suggest at having those meaty qualities. Such as by smoking something. But aren't directly trying to be fake meat per se. I'll steer someone towards something that I feel is going to be hearty and satisfying. But it is its own entity and is not trying to pretend to be roast beef or what have you.

TREVOR: It's when you suggest substituting carob for chocolate. They say: oh, this really doesn't taste like chocolate.

ERIC: Exactly. That's it. Carob. It's a good thing in its own right. But it ain't chocolate. I'll tell you that much.

TREVOR: However, for people that want the umami flavor and the texture that they can really sink their teeth into. These recipes are great and I appreciate you sharing special techniques like freezing the tofu to make it more spongy or having a tighter wrap around the seitan to make it denser.

ERIC: There's all sorts of tricks of the trade. There's a lot you can do.

TREVOR: We have another question or possible comment here from Meredith McCarty. Actually, it's the person that suggested I get in touch with you. Do you know Meredith?

ERIC: I do.

TREVOR: Okay. So she says: thanks so much for your wonderful creative foods. I've never stopped thinking about a seitan dish I had at Millenium years ago with mushroom marsala. And another one with a red onion jam. Can you talk about how you crafted those recipes?

ERIC: Sure. The one with the mushroom marsala. We're taking basically wheat gluten. Wrapping it in cheesecloth and brazing it in a flavorful stock. Cooling it down. Slicing it into medallions. Then we braise it again once it's sliced in medallions in a flavorful sauce with tamari and all that stuff. Then we pan sear it with shitake mushrooms.

Then we have a premade marsala mushroom sauce. That's taking our dark mushroom stock in marsala wine. Cooked down and thickened. Kind of ladling that over and letting it all thicken up. And serving it with some mashed potatoes. There you go.

The thing with the marmalade. It's a smoked Portobello mushroom we used to do as an appetizer and still bring it back from time to time. It's exactly that. Thin slices with smoked Portobello mushroom that are grilled. And serve it with a little bit of aioli onion marmalade in a crustini. It's truly fantastic.

TREVOR: Great. Then she wants to know: do you get inspired by menu items or recipes that have meat and then translate them into the flavorful tempeh, seitan or tofu recipes?

ERIC: Totally. We look at traditional cuisines. If I look at a menu of something that sounds fantastic by design. We're sort of more extrapolating the flavor profiles of those dishes. We're not trying to mimic them per se. But just try to get the way cuisine X might season product Y or Restaurant Hugh down the street is preparing this wonderful salmon dish with all these wonderful components.

And the way they kind of layer the flavors together. We're going to extrapolate some of those qualities. And turn it into our own Millenium vegan cuisine.

TREVOR: Are any of the recipes that you provided for this lesson. Were any of those inspired by meat recipes?

ERIC: Well, obviously the seitan sausage recipe is directly taken. The seasons are direct from a Merguez, which is a highly seasoned lamb sausage. The other ones may borrow some of the qualities from some meat-based recipes. But are not directly. The empanada, I guess, in many respects.

The filling is like something you would do with a meat product like ground pork. Something. But we're using tempeh for that. It's really more about the seasonings and the other components versus like exchanging tofu for meat product X. Not so much.

TREVOR: We have a question from Bobbie. She wants to know: where do you get the vital gluten flour and do you keep it in the fridge?

ERIC: Vital gluten flours. Big or small. Is going to carry it. There's a couple different companies like Bob's Red Mill. If you're not going to use it very often, keep it in the fridge. Or keep it somewhere out of the sunlight in a relatively cool area. It's going to survive for quite some time.

TREVOR: We're open for more questions. While we're waiting for them. Do you have any other ideas or thoughts on this topic you'd like to share?

ERIC: Don't discount beans in terms of providing satiating feelings. Sure, beans are beans. But at least for me, that's my favorite vegetable protein to say the least. That's a whole other story unto itself because there's such a variance on the flavor and texture profile.

Like with the pasta recipe, if you can get your hands on really large cannellini runner beans or gigante beans. Out here in the Bay area, Jacoby Farms, Rancho Gordo, which you can look up their website. They're a purveyor of at least 20 varieties of beans. Or Phipps Ranch. There's a lot of textures and flavor profiles in its own right.

Something we do at the restaurant. We do a black bean torte where we're taking black beans. And pureeing them with a little bit of caramelized smoked onions. And layering it between tortillas and baking it off. And I tell you that's one of the more satiating dishes we have on the menu.

TREVOR: One reason some people. Especially when they're new to this diet. Kind of shy away from beans is that they're concerned it causes gas. They're not the easiest food to digest. Do you do anything special in your preparation to release the gas producing sugars from the beans?

ERIC: Depending on the bean and the age of the bean. Either soak overnight or do a 4-hour quick soak: bring up to boil, turn off, let it hang out. In a lot of preparations, we're going to add some epazote leaves. Which is traditional to Latin American and Mexican cuisines.

For exactly doing that sort of degassing the beans. As well as cloves like cloves set in onion. Sometimes a piece of wakame or kombu acts as a raft. It collects all the impurities on that piece of seaweed and then you remove that.

TREVOR: So wakame or kombu are both types of seaweed. Before that and before close. You mentioned that some type of leaf?

ERIC: Yes. Epazote.

TREVOR: Okay. I haven't heard of that. What is that?

ERIC: Epazote. I'm not sure of the family. It's actually a pretty common weed. I have it in a little planter box at home. You can sometimes find it in parks around the Bay area. I've been walking down a green point in Brooklyn in the summertime the last time I visited. And there it is. Big tufts of epazote coming out of the sidewalk. So it's in many respects a weed. It's used as a seasoning. It's used in bean cookery. And for whatever reason it helps to break down some of the insoluble fibers and sugars in the beans.

TREVOR: That's good. And the four-hour quick soak. Can you be specific if people want to do that at home. How long do they actually keep the beans on the boil for and what do they do after that?

ERIC: Bring it up to boil. Turn off the heat. Remove it from the heat. Let it hang out for 3-4 hours. Drain it, rinse it, start again. Also, so much depends on the freshness and variety of the beans. Some of the new crop beans we don't even do a presoak and we have no issues. That seems to be, depending on whom you read.

If you read some of the Mexican and Hispanic cookbooks. They don't soak their beans. They just throw in the epazote and go and don't seem to have any problems. I really think some of it has to do with whether that bean is a new crop dried bean or not.

TREVOR: Let's see. We have a couple more questions. First of all, the type of leaves you just talked about. How do you spell that?

ERIC: I think it's really phonetically spelled.

TREVOR: Then the question is: is there a recipe for a generic seitan that can be used as cutlets or chunks in more common recipes?

ERIC: In the First Millenium Cookbook, I've got recipes for a more generic seitan. It's just a simple unseasoned seitan. You could use it for cutlets. You could chop it up and add seasonings to it.

TREVOR: Can you give us the basic recipe right now verbally?

ERIC: I guess I could. If you looked up that recipe. Because I wouldn't be sure of the proportions. If you looked at the recipe I gave you and pulled out all the seasonings and either pulled out

the oil or it had half that amount of oil and either wrap it in the cheesecloth and bake it off for cutlets or done it loaf style. By cooking it in a vegetable stock so it has some flavor put into it, you'd be pretty much on the bar.

TREVOR: I'm looking at the list of ingredients for that sausage. There's the gluten flour, water and tamari. Should we keep any of the other ingredients or throw the rest out for this purpose?

ERIC: Realistically, leave everything out.

TREVOR: So all we have is two cups of vital gluten flour. One tablespoon tamari. And one copy of water.

ERIC: I know I sautéed some of the seasonings. If you add a little bit of oil to just slightly soften the texture of the product, that'd be cool. You'd have a slightly softer texture. You can either add a little oil or forego that. It'd be good either way.

TREVOR: So you make a dough out of that. So what would be the next step to make just a basic unseasoned.

ERIC: Make the dough. Either do it loaf style where you're taking that dough and baking it in vegetable broth.

TREVOR: Submerged.

ERIC: Yes. Submerged in vegetable broth. Or wrapping it in cheesecloth tight and then baking it or boiling it in vegetable stock so you get a tight and then unwrapping it and cutting it into medallions.

TREVOR: All right. Then we have another question from Lenore: in your Asian Long Bean and Tempeh Salad, which is lesson 6.9. What would you substitute for Thai basil leaves if they're not available.

ERIC: Some fresh mint leaves would be great. Italian basil or fresh mint would be great for that.

TREVOR: If basil is available, how many leaves do you use?

ERIC: Thai basil?

TREVOR: Yeah.

ERIC: Oh, I don't know. Per serving, like 4-6 leaves. You want to know it's presence is there.

TREVOR: Well, we've got about 10 minutes left. If you have more questions, now's the time. Just submit them. This is good. I'm glad. One of the comments is that a lot of the recipes are a little bit complex. But they're also really delicious. You might not be making these on a daily basis. But when you want to impress your friends who come over or do something special for a holiday. These are the recipes you want to be making.

ERIC: Also. About with any recipe. Maybe try it once. They're good concepts to get under the belt. You can sort of dissect the recipes. Again, I give the recipes for the tofu part of it. For the seitan

part of it. Or the grilled mushrooms and then give a sub-recipe of what you can do with it. You can do all sorts of things with it. You can sort of deconstruct some of these recipes to simplify them as you see fit per se. They're going to take a little bit of time and you're going to be pleased with the results.

TREVOR: We don't have a new question yet. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't gotten to talk about yet on this topic?

ERIC: Well, not so much. That kind of covers the meaty end of things. In terms of like the Black Bean Pecan Cake. If you did it gluten free without the seitan. To my opinion, it's still kind of meaty because between the beans and nuts. Because I also place nuts with having a meaty quality.

They're a higher protein vegetable food. They usually contain a decent amount of fat. So they're pretty satiating. Combined with beans and even using corn masa instead of the gluten flour. You're going to get a really satiating product. We haven't even. That's a whole other can of worms is cookery using nuts and seeds.

TREVOR: Well, do you want to just touch on that. We've got five minutes and we're out of questions so. For people that are new to this diet and are looking for satiating meals or satiating foods, how might they integrate nuts and seeds?

ERIC: It's fairly common. What we do when we want to get the whole like dairy cream sauce quality going, it's certainly not for the folks on the low fat diet, to say the least. But using a nut milk such as cashew milk. But really you don't need a whole lot. Between the level of starch and the proteins and fat in the cashews. What we do with cashews, which is kind of a staple at Millenium.

We blanch them for about 30 seconds to a minute. It does two things. It sanitizes them because a lot of times nuts have a lot of natural yeast on them. If I'm grinding it into a cashew milk, I want to hold it for a couple days.

A lot of times we've had trouble in the past where if it's not the right temperature, they tend to ferment. Fermented nut products can be great as long as you know what your fermenting medium is. But not what we're looking for.

So either soaking the nuts or blanching them. It actually softens the nuts. Then we put them into a blender, put a bunch of water into it. Level with the amount of nuts. Start blending. It starts to seize up when there's not enough liquid. And then slowly add water with the motor running. In a slow stream.

It's kind of like your making an emulsified vinaigrette until you yield something with the consistency of. Maybe a little thinner than pancake or crepe batter and heavy cream. You've got this wonderful product that's not unlike heavy cream where it thickens whatever sauce you're making pretty well.

We'll use that for all sorts of applications. You wanted to try to get the vegan equivalent of a macaroni and cheese. Sometimes that's our go to starting point. Then there we'll add nutritional yeast and some other components to give it a dairy-like taste besides the mouth feel.

TREVOR: You said something about it will thicken. Is that when it's heated or?

ERIC: When heated. Yes. Let's say you're making. Right now on our menu, we've got a sauce. A kind of garlic cream sauce. We're sweating down thin slices of garlic and leeks, deglazing with white wine, vegetable sauce and nutritional yeast.

We let that simmer a bit and add cashew cream in say 1 part cashew cream to about 4 parts of the vegetable stock medium, and let it simmer. It just naturally breaks down that much more and kind of absorbs the moisture and thickens the whole sauce up. You get a really pleasing texture as well as flavor.

TREVOR: Since we're on that topic. I figured I'd point people to lesson 15.21. This is where you can find Jo Stepaniak on cashew cheese sauce. You mentioned macaroni and cheese. So as you mentioned, she uses ½ cup of cashew butter.

And mixes that with a bunch of other ingredients including nutritional yeast to create a cheesy sauce. But and now that I've mentioned that. What is the difference between using cashew butter and whole cashews as your starting point?

ERIC: In many respects no difference. You can take cashew butter, either with a whisk or put it into a blender and again if you're doing the blender version, thin it out with a slow stream of water until you get a cream consistency or whisk in water. You're good. It'll get you to where you want to be.

TREVOR: Eric, I really appreciate your time tonight. If people want to find out more about you or Millenium they go to www.millenium.com. Correct? Do you want to say any more about what they'll find on that website?

ERIC: It just kind of gives you an overview of what's happening at the restaurant. We usually update our menus quarterly and it shows the seasonal change in menu. But we're rotating our menus every couple of weeks. It tells about our special events.

We're always doing special events. We're doing one if not two things a month. This coming Wednesday, we're doing our southern comfort dinner. We're doing really American food done vegan. In June the whole month we'll be featuring morels and porcini mushrooms and we're doing a really nice wine maker dinner with Matt Cline from Three Winery.

I do hands on cooking classes at the restaurant, which is a more than full-day outing. We usually meet the day before at a farmers' market, pick out our produce, come up with some ideas of what we want to do. The following day we get in the kitchen and do a solid 8 hours in the kitchen.

You can find all that info on our website. You can also join our facebook site and sign up for a little twitter feed where we sometimes will talk about our daily specials and if we're doing any nightly promotions on twitter. It gives you an up to the minute thing about what's going on there.

TREVOR: Sounds good. Well thank you so much. I really appreciate you. Not only tonight doing this call with us. But creating the lesson so people could understand the key ingredients and secrets that go into these meaty recipes. You have a great night.

ERIC: Well, thank you very much.

TREVOR: You're welcome. And thank you.