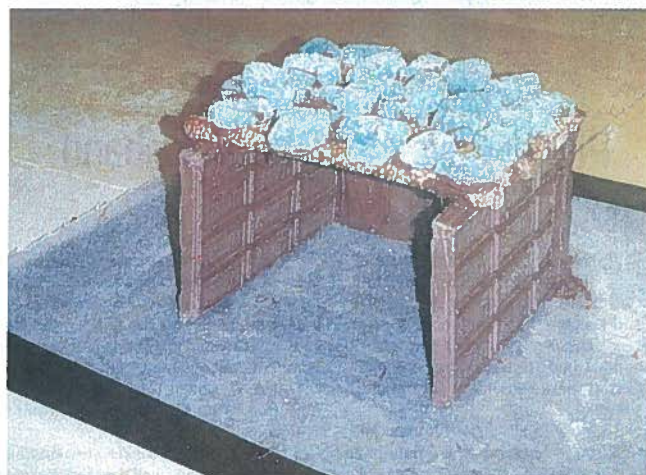




Pleintiful peppers



Chokkah-Sukkah

Peppers Stuffed with Grains Celebrate Bounty of Edible Gifts

Mélange of Vegetables and Chocolate Treat Make Sukkah Dining Delicious

RACHEL HARKHAM

You've been good. You got the kids their school supplies, the expensive new sneakers, a Hello Kitty backpack on wheels. You met the teachers and perhaps even signed up for the PTA. (Wow, you've been very good!) You snipped off tags and coordinated High Holiday outfits. You bought round challah with chocolate chips (www.challahfairy.com). You picked a colorful variety of apples from golden yellow to dark red. And you remembered the jar of thick, sweet honey to dip it all in. You made sure everyone had a sweet New Year.

When Yom Kippur presented itself, you apologized for yelling too much, or not paying enough attention, or relying too often on the microwave at dinnertime. Lately, you've been good and busy. In the meantime, the season has been mellowing into autumn.

With that, Sukkot arrives.

Sukkot, is the Feast of the Tabernacles. Meals are enjoyed outdoors in a sukkah. As the holiday is a harvest festival, it only makes sense to take advantage of the beautiful and seasonal fruits and vegetables available this time of the year. The food customs associated with Sukkot are to serve dishes that are overflowing with vegetables and grains to symbolize the bounty of God's edible gifts. Traditional dishes include kreplach and stuffed cabbages.

By Sukkot you deserve to sit back and savor the crisp autumn weather and the colorful foliage, over a hot dish of Pleintiful Peppers. Stuffed with cooked barley and red beans with salsa, mixed in for additional flavor, this is a good way to get your kids to try barley. Topped off with crushed tortillas or shredded cheese, it is a tasty, filling and healthy dish.

And then because you're so good – and also a wee bit bad – to celebrate Sukkot you let your kids make a chokkah-sukkah worthy of Willy Wonka. This relatively easy chocolate and candy project captures the freewheeling fun of the outdoor holiday and the cool fall weather will prevent your sukkah from melting. Just make sure not keep it out in the actual sukkah – bugs love chocolate and candy, too. And, eat it by Simchat Torah.

Pleintiful Peppers

- 6 red, yellow, orange, green peppers or combination
 - 1 cup pearl barley, prepared according to package instructions
 - 1 14-ounce can red beans, drained
 - 2 cups salsa, divided
 - 1 teaspoon chili powder
 - Salt and pepper, to taste
 - Garnishes: ½ cup crushed tortilla chips or ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to boil over high heat.
 2. Core and seed peppers, leaving the bottoms intact. Submerge peppers in boiling water. For 4 to 5 minutes, until crisp-tender. Remove and let cool briefly
 3. Meanwhile in a large bowl combine prepared barley, beans, 1 ½ cups salsa, 1 teaspoon chili powder and salt and pepper to taste.
 4. Arrange peppers in casserole pan cut side up. Stuff barley-bean filling into peppers.
 5. Spoon remaining salsa over peppers. Top with crushed

tortillas to keep recipe pareve, or shredded cheddar for dairy option.

6. Bake uncovered for 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot.

Chokkah-Sukkah

- 3 Giant Hershey Bars (7 ounces)
- 10 to 15 gummy spearmint leaves or 2 green fruit rolls
- 5 to 8 pretzel rods

1. The Hershey Bars have four rows of four pieces. Holding the bar horizontally break off one vertical row, so that three remain. Do this with all three bars.
2. Chop leftover chocolate to morsel size and place in a microwave-proof bowl and heat on high for 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from microwave stir until chocolate melts together. This will serve as your choco-paste.
3. The three chocolate bars will be your three sukkah walls. With a metal spatula or a knife thickly spread melted chocolate along the edges of the bars to adhere together.
4. While the chocolate begins to dry, cut spearmint leaves lengthwise in half. Or, with kitchen scissors, cut leafy shapes out of the fruit rolls.
5. Spread melted chocolate on either end of each pretzel rod, and place across top of chokka-sukkah.
6. Dab each "leaf" with melted chocolate and spread out over the surface of the rods.

Rachel Harkham is a Rockland County mother of three who has a cooking blog and runs a small chocolate business.