

Corn and Black Bean Cakes

Makes about 10 pancakes

My mom made a version of these savory pancakes for dinner when I was a kid. My updated version is healthier, but no less delicious—and now I enjoy them for breakfast, too. For best results, don't try to flip the pancakes until they are thoroughly crisped on the underside; only then will they release from the pan easily. —DS

1 1/2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
1/2 cup cornmeal
1 tablespoon aluminum-free baking powder
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1 1/2 cups unsweetened, unflavored plant milk
1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 medium red bell pepper, seeded and finely diced
1 (10-ounce) package frozen corn kernels, thawed
1 cup cooked or canned black beans, rinsed and drained
6 green onions, white and light green parts thinly sliced
Tomato Salsa (or use store-bought), for serving
Sour "Cream" for serving
Chopped fresh cilantro, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 200°F.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt until well combined. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and add the plant milk, applesauce, bell pepper, corn, black beans, and green onions. Gently fold the ingredients together just until incorporated. Do not overmix.
3. Heat a griddle or large nonstick pan over medium heat until a few droplets of water dropped in the pan jump and sizzle.
4. Spoon 1/2 cup batter for each pancake onto the pan, making sure they don't touch each other, until no more will fit. Cook until the undersides are crisp and the pancake can be flipped easily without falling apart, about 4 minutes. Using a spatula, turn the pancakes over and cook until the other side is lightly browned and crisp, about 4 minutes. Transfer the pancakes to a heatproof platter and place in the oven to keep warm.

Repeat with the remaining batter.

5. Serve the pancakes topped with salsa, sour “cream,” and chopped cilantro.

Sour “Cream”

Makes about 1 1/2 cups

This is delicious on top of Corn and Black Bean Cakes, which I added to it, as

well as on steamed vegetables; lentil soup; and, naturally, steamed or baked potatoes. —DS

1 (12-ounce) package firm or extra-firm silken tofu

3 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Sea salt

1. Combine the tofu and vinegar in a food processor and process until smooth and creamy. Add salt to taste.

2. Use immediately or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Tomato Salsa

Makes about 1 cup, can use with the Corn and Black Bean Cakes.

A friend of mine taught me his family recipe for salsa roja de molcajete, or tomato salsa made in a traditional stone mortar and pestle. I’ve adapted it so that I can make it without the molcajete. Roasting the chile and the tomatoes brings out the authentic earthy taste even without the traditional tools. —DT

1 (2-inch) piece dried red chile, any hot variety

6 ripe plum tomatoes

2 (1/2-inch-thick) onion wedges

1 clove garlic

Sea salt

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh cilantro

1. Place the dried chile in a skillet and cook over high heat for 1 to 2 minutes until the chile puffs up or gets some dark spots;

be careful not to burn the chile or it will be bitter. Remove the chile from the pan and set aside to cool.

2. Place the whole tomatoes in the skillet and roast over medium heat. Turn them periodically as they get charred and roast until almost the entire surface is charred, about 10 minutes. Remove the tomatoes from the heat and set aside to cool.

3. Place 2 of the tomatoes in a blender along with the roasted chile, the onions, garlic, and salt to taste. Blend into a smooth sauce. Add the remaining tomatoes and pulse so that the salsa is well blended but still chunky. Stir in the cilantro. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Transfer to a bowl, cover, and chill until ready to serve. For longer storage, transfer to an airtight container and store in the refrigerator for 4 to 5 days.