



Seek the savory side of chocolate in the new year

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December 22, 2014

While I still pay attention to what I eat during the holidays, I nonetheless allow plenty of small splurges. And those splurges mostly can be summed up in one word: chocolate!

Trouble is, the holidays eventually pass, but my cravings for the deep flavor of a perfectly-roasted cocoa bean linger. Even more than the sweetness that accompanies most chocolate desserts, I miss the unctuous coating cocoa leaves on the palate. But who says healthy eating must mean the end of that deliciousness? Enter unsweetened chocolate! All the richness of the flavor without the sugar.

My healthy chocolate-eating strategy has me leaning toward savory dishes because they need no sugar for me to appreciate the wonderful flavor of the cocoa. Among the most classic choices - and one of my favorites - is Mexican mole, a thick, spicy sauce based on cocoa or chocolate that traditionally takes a couple of days to develop its rich flavors.

But I have four hungry kids who aren't willing to wait days for chocolate, sweet or savory. So I have developed a version of mole that takes under an hour. Does it capture all the flavor of a two-day mole? Nope. But for a recipe that shaves 47 hours off my labor, I think it still does a pretty darned good job.

And you can take comfort in knowing that you're getting all the delicious benefits and satisfaction of chocolate without the pesky sugar. Chocolate in the New Year? Yes, indeed. All in the name of health.

CHICKEN IN QUICK MOLE SAUCE

Start to finish: 45 minutes

Servings: 4

3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 1/4 pounds),
cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large yellow onion, roughly chopped
3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
2 teaspoons chili powder
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
3/4 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
15-ounce can diced tomatoes
2 tablespoons chopped chipotles in adobo (more or less
according to heat preference)
1 teaspoon grated orange zest
1/2 cup prune juice (or 1/4 cup chopped pitted prunes)



1 1/4 cups chicken stock
1 tablespoon almond butter or peanut butter
2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
Squeeze of lime (1 to 2 teaspoons)
Fresh cilantro, chopped, to serve

Season the chicken on all sides with salt and pepper.

In a large saute pan over medium-high, heat the oil. Add the chicken and brown until golden on all sides, about 7 minutes. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

Return the pan to medium heat and add the onion. Cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes. Add the garlic, chili powder, cumin, coriander and cinnamon, then cook, stirring, until very fragrant, another 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and let cook for 3 more minutes. Add the chipotles, orange zest and prune juice, then cook an additional minute, stirring.

Add the stock and let simmer until the onion is fairly soft, about 5 minutes. Remove the mixture from the heat and allow to cool for several minutes. Pour or spoon carefully into a blender, then add the almond butter, chocolate and lime juice. Let sit for a minute in the hot liquid. Blend carefully - low at first, then at higher speed - until the sauce is smooth, about 1 minute. Add more stock if the sauce is too thick.

Return the chicken to the pan (no need to clean it) and pour the sauce over the chicken. Heat over medium until the chicken is cooked through, another 8 to 10 minutes. Serve with rice and beans and top with cilantro.

Nutrition information per serving: 430 calories; 190 calories from fat (44 percent of total calories); 21 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 105 mg cholesterol; 26 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 11 g sugar; 39 g protein; 690 mg sodium.

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