

# Vegan meals don't get any easier, or tastier, than this spaghetti and chocolate mousse combo

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While walking through a specialty grocery store last fall, I saw a magazine that caught my eye — *PlantBased* — on the shelf.

The cover said 67 recipes that are totally vegan. So I thought, why not? I'm ready for new vegan dishes. I have *not* been disappointed with a single recipe from that magazine, so it was well worth \$12.99.

The recipes range from breakfast to dessert, and the bonus is that they are easy to make. A large number of them are dishes that I love to eat anyway.

But one of those recipes is so tasty that I consider it gourmet — **One Pot Spaghetti Puttanesca**. I'm a believer in easy recipes, so for me vegan food does not have to be complicated to taste great.

## **Before finding easy vegan recipes**

I had given up on finding an outstanding spaghetti recipe until I found that magazine on the grocery shelf. Throwing wheat pasta together with a jar of spaghetti sauce and adding some vegetables doesn't cut it for me as a vegan. Seven years ago, before I became a vegan, it was good enough but not anymore.

My tastes have advanced, and I now know that food is best made from scratch. Now with tasty vegan dishes like this spaghetti recipe I feel satisfied, and my taste buds are more sensitive and not dulled by bland food. I'll bet that wasn't something you think when you hear the word "vegan."

This spaghetti recipe has ingredients that more than complement each other. From the red onions to the capers to the sun-dried tomatoes, all those flavors blend and melt in your mouth.

Don't be afraid to use linguine instead of spaghetti; just add a couple more minutes of cook time. The amount of tomatoes can be adjusted as needed. I used fresh tomatoes the last time and that added more vibrant color.

### **After finding easy vegan recipes**

Working 40 hours a week and not having time to cook full meals at night led me to search for vegan dishes that I could make on

the weekends. Now, I have found easy recipes that can be prepared after I get home and still have leftovers to freeze like these recipes.



I hope you will try making this wonderful spaghetti dish that I love, because you will, too. You will wonder where this recipe has been all your life.

A tasty and simple vegan meal: One-Pot Spaghetti Puttanesca paired with chocolate pudding. *Cindy Gewecke, Special to the Press-Citizen*

# One-Pot Spaghetti Puttanesca

Serves 3

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp dried chili flakes
- 2 oz olives
- 6 sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 3 tbsp capers
- 1 14 oz can chopped tomatoes (or fresh)
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 7 oz spaghetti
- Handful of chopped chives, for garnish

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan (I use a stock pot to give the spaghetti more room) over medium heat, then add the red onion, garlic, chili flakes, olives, sun-dried tomatoes and capers and cook for 4-5 minutes. Then, add the canned/fresh tomatoes and vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Once boiling, add the spaghetti to the pan and cook for 10-12 minutes until the spaghetti is cooked and the sauce has thickened. I add hot water if the spaghetti needs more liquid to cook completely. Season to taste and sprinkle with chives or veggie parmesan.

Want dessert, too? The chocolate pudding recipe is easy and filling. It came from a cooking class I took with a vegan friend a few years ago. The instructor, **Jessica LaFayette**, uses raw foods only and runs her own raw/vegan restaurant in Cedar Rapids called **Rawlicious**. The avocados make the pudding extremely creamy. Fire up the food processor and enjoy this Chocolate Mousse. I've included the instructor's variations for additional options you can enjoy.

# Chocolate Mousse

Makes 6 servings

- ½ cup pitted medjool dates, soaked until very soft
- ½ cup agave nectar or maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1½ cups mashed avocado (3 avocados that are very soft)
- ¾ cup organic cacao powder
- ½ cup water

Place the dates, agave and vanilla in a food processor and process until smooth. Add the mashed avocado and cacao powder and process until creamy. You may need to stop and scrape down the sides of the bowl with a spatula a few times. Add the water and process until smooth. Serve at room temperature or chilled. Stored in a sealed container in the refrigerator, it will keep up to five days, and two weeks in the freezer.

**Fudgesicles:** Freeze it in ice cube trays. Thaw for 5 minutes before serving.

**Sauce or fondue:** Increase water to 1 cup. Serve with fresh strawberries, bananas or tangerines.

*Cindy Gewecke is employed by a CPA firm and resides outside of Cedar Rapids. Besides cooking every weekend, she enjoys dancing, volunteering and reading.*

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