



# TUV HASHAVUA

## BEST OF THE WEEK

### How About a “Vegducken” for Thanksgiving?

*Brian Gardner Hoashi, Member, Tuv Ha'Aretz CSA*

#### MANY THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS !

11/17 [Wk #26- B]

5-8pm Pick-up

Sandra Garcia

Mary Beth Bentaha

Min Kuo

Edda Elias

1:00pm Truck Unloading

Valeria Vavassori-  
Chen

Brian Gardner  
Hoashi

8pm Unclaimed Shares

David Snyder

The Vegducken Recipe:  
[epicurious.com/recipes/  
food/views/vegducken](http://epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/vegducken)

#### GRAINS, BEANS, FLOUR PICK UP

- *Final share for the season is 11/17*
- *Please note – no unclaimed shares will be held over*
- *Any unclaimed shares will be donated to the food bank*

TUV HA'ARETZ CSA at the  
Forest Hills Jewish Center

106-06 Queens Blvd.  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
[tuv@fhjc.org](mailto:tuv@fhjc.org)

- **Tuv Ha'Aretz CSA:**  
[foreshillstuvcsa.com](http://foreshillstuvcsa.com)
- **Facebook:**  
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[goldenearthworm.com](http://goldenearthworm.com)
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- **Hazon:** [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)

The wife is a good cook, and an adventurous one. Using only a standard NYC apartment kitchen, she makes nearly all of the food we eat. It's not that she doesn't like eating out, but it is by actually making a dish that she learns about a food – by researching how it's made and why the original cooks made their choices. Sometimes there is a new technique, or new ingredients, a new way to put everything together, or even how it's served. I'm her sous-chef and I do what I'm told – which entails a lot of chopping, temperature watching, pan flipping, baking bread, giving my opinion when asked – and by eating what she prepares and taking part in the discussions and assessments to improve the food we enjoy.

Throughout our many decades together, we've tried all manner of eating styles – some for health, and always for curiosity. We have taken on the challenge of “going vegan” when friends' health issues meant we might not see them if we didn't eat likewise. Or we have adapted cuisines that had a big effect on our eating because learning how to cook them simply required an immersion of our cooking mind-sets (Indian fare, for instance). Sometimes, we tackle ornate dishes simply because of cost – i.e., a big turducken can cost in the hundreds of dollars, and making it is more affordable. Or because we simply can't get something unless we make it ourselves, such as a New Zealand-style meat pie, or my mother's pumpkin soup.

Most of the time, the food testing turns out quite well, and we really do feel like we've learned new things – which in turn can affect our day-to-day cooking. But now and again, we end up wondering why a recipe exists at all – case in point, the “vegducken / squashducken” recipes that have been making the rounds of the foody-verse this autumn.

One day, I noticed she had bought some just-out-of-season vegetables. This is unusual, because we get a full CSA share, so we always have plenty of ingredients. More importantly, we agreed to cook with what we have, rather than defining our meals by things we have to purchase “specially.” And that night, she took longer than usual to fill the dishwasher after dinner (she throws me out of the kitchen if I try to fill it, telling me I *always* do it wrong). I peeked into the kitchen and saw her viciously scraping up the insides of a butternut squash; I offered to help (she says I'm better at not cutting myself) and followed instructions to “gut out” the squash, eggplant, and zucchini. I cooked the onions, garlic, and vegetable “innards” she'd hand-chopped to make into a stuffing. She tasted and re-seasoned, and when she declared it done, I stepped aside for further instructions.

My primary job during such experiments is to fetch and carry (“oven to 400; rotate foil perpendicular to the way you usually do it; oval baker, no not that one, the one Mark gave me; forget the string, that's stupid...”), and to take photos; the photographs she posts on Facebook are mine. Getting a good shot means keeping out of the way of knives and tossed pots, and maneuvering around the limitations of lighting without hindering her progress. And once prepped, my job was to find room in the fridge to store the foil-wrapped vegetable beast.

Why was she so determined to do this “vegducken” experiment so soon before Thanksgiving? She and co-editor Judith Mermelstein put together the weekly CSA newsletter, and they had planned to feature this vegetarian Thanksgiving roast. But each had some questions about the featured author's recipe, and the wife simply felt she should make the recipe to figure it out.

We roasted the vegducken the following morning and had a nice lunch of "Thanksgiving dinner," along with glazed rutabagas (another experiment) and kale salad. As we ate our slices, we concluded some things about this franken-veg roast:

\* Do not assume this is a meaty roast, despite the recipe author's insistence that she "made it meaty" – you will get a soft, steamed overall texture. Autumn vegetable flesh is rather mutable, its texture tends to be smooth, and individual flavors tend to morph into the whole.

\* As we ate the soft, pretty slices, we experienced no marked difference in flavors between the layers, and ended up wishing that the vegetables were prepared separately, for better and more varied flavor experiences.

\* We suspect these particular vegetables were chosen for general availability and for being somewhat tubular shaped, the better for the "ooh-ahh" effect upon slicing. We've seen other recipes with leeks instead of eggplant, and choosing more seasonal fare would be more psychologically satisfying for some.

\* There were some pan drippings; dissolved with water and mounted with a pat of butter, it made a most delicious vegetable gravy, worthy of any viand, whether plant or meat.

\* Use a serrated knife for slicing and don't press down too much, or the whole roast will simply squish down and there will be tears. You may need to pat the slice into a rounder shape once on the plate.

\* Do have a sauce on hand, and toast the nuts to scatter over each serving. Or serve with a crunchy side like celery and cranberry salad, for contrasting textures and flavor accents.

\* We don't recommend serving pumpkin pie if you are making a vegducken, or you may find yourself with too many pumpkin-like flavors.

So ... will we be making this stuffed vegetable-in-vegetable roast for Thanksgiving?

Alas, probably not. This roast can, however, replace the turducken in terms of spectacle and is a good choice for a festive presentation. But vegetables are so awesome, why use them to mimic something that is already a bit of an abomination? However, it was a great experiment, and we can now critique from a position of authority-from-experience. ☺ 

Brian Gardner Hoashi has been married to Maki for 30 years or so. His photos of their food are the ones you see on the Tuv Ha'Aretz Facebook feed.

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX??

### Sweet Potatoes, Collards, Cauliflower, Watermelon Radish, Rutabaga, Fennel, French Turnips, Arugula, Broccoli

#### MASHED FRENCH TURNIPS OR RUTABAGAS

*Allyoop, food.com, Serves 8-10*

2 cups cooked, mashed turnips or rutabagas	pepper, to taste
1 egg	1/2 cup grated cheese
2 tbsp butter	<b>THICK WHITE SAUCE</b>
1/8 tsp savory salt, to taste	3 tbsp butter
	3 tbsp flour
	1 cup milk

Blend together the mashed turnip, egg, butter, savory, salt and pepper. Stir well. Place in a buttered baking dish. Top with a thick white sauce made with the butter flour and milk. Sprinkle on the grated cheese. Bake in 400° oven for 25 minutes.

**White Sauce:** In a saucepan, melt the butter and whisk with flour to make a smooth paste. Cook till lightly browned. Carefully add cold milk, whisking to remove lumps. Bring the mixture to a boil to thicken.

#### BRAZILIAN-STYLE COLLARDS *wholefoods.com, Serves 4-6*

1 bunch collard greens	2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	Sea salt, to taste
1/2 tbsp butter	Ground pepper, to taste
1 medium shallot, minced	

Cut tough end stems off collard greens. Rinse leaves and gather them together into 2 piles. Take each pile and roll it tightly. Cut them into thin strips crosswise. You should have about 8 cups.

Heat oil and butter in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Sauté and stir shallot with garlic until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add greens, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring often, for about 5 minutes or until greens are tender but bright green. If necessary, cover and cook an additional few minutes to tenderize greens.

#### HONEY & PEPPER BRAISED ROOT VEGETABLES

*Bert Greene, Kitchen Bouquets, Serves 4-6*

3 cups diced root vegetables (e.g. - rutabagas, turnips, watermelon radish, daikon, radishes, carrots, beets, etc.)	1/2 cup warm water, plus more for braising
2 tbsp butter or olive oil	2 tbsp (or more!) freshly ground black pepper salt, to taste

Heat oil or butter in a covered saucepan over medium heat. Add vegetables and cook, with stirring, to coat all the vegetables. Add water, honey, and black pepper. Lower heat to simmer, put lid askew on the pot to let some of the water evaporate while cooking. Braise 10-20 minutes till vegetables are tender. Add more water as needed to prevent burning. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

#### PAN-ROASTED SWEET POTATOES & FENNEL

*Grace Parisi, foodandwine.com, Serves 4-6*

1 lb sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1 1/2-inch chunks	1/8 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 fennel bulbs, halved lengthwise and cut into 3/4-inch wedges, and some of the feathery tops set aside and finely chopped	1/2 tbsp light brown sugar
	1/8 tsp ground mace or nutmeg
	Salt, to taste
	Pepper, to taste

Heat oven to 400°. In a bowl, toss sweet potato chunks and fennel wedges with olive oil, brown sugar, mace, salt, and pepper.

Spread vegetables in a large nonstick roasting pan. Roast for about 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until sweet potatoes and fennel are tender and caramelized. Transfer to a platter, sprinkle with fennel tops and serve hot or lukewarm.