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susannye@tds.net
603/526 7319

Octo from the Latin meaning eight and **ber** from the universal meaning it's **getting chilly outside**. Wait a minute, back up the train. An octopus has eight legs, an octagon eight sides but October is the tenth not the eighth month of the year. What's up? Blame it on Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome. He made eight the new ten around 700 BC by adding January and February to the start of the calendar year. As far as I'm concerned, he is also responsible for any septo-, octo-, novem and decem errors I made on my SAT's. If it weren't for Numa, I'd be a Harvard graduate and a billionaire with long legs and fabulous hair.

In spite of the confusing name, October has a lot going for it. With fall foliage at its peak, this is especially true in New England.

Above and beyond the crimson and gold landscape, October is a great month for foodies.

Someone or other has declared October **Applejack Month** so you might want to think about inventing a new cocktail. Something with cider and applejack sounds fall-ish and festive. Debut your cocktail on the 11th, also known as **It's My Party Day**.

Speaking of parties, **Columbus Day** on the 14th gives many people a day off and a long weekend. The fall foliage will be at its peak and it's a great time to bring friends and family together for a celebration. After all, you'll have an extra day to recover!

If you've got a sweet tooth, October is also **Cookie Month**. Why not bake a batch of your favorite cookies and celebrate **Mad Hatter Day** with a fabulous tea party on the 6th? If that doesn't work out, you can try again with a **National Dessert Day** gala on the 14th.

When you need a break from cooking, feel free to call for take-out. October is **National Pizza Month**. That said with endless possibilities, it's fun to make your own. Consider throwing a pizza party. If you choose the 18th, be sure to end with chocolate cupcakes. Yes, the 18th is Chocolate Cupcake Day. Who would have guessed?

With beautiful squash, parsnips, beets, broccoli and cool weather greens in the market, it will be easy to celebrate **National Vegetarian Month**. Some linguine or penne tossed with your favorite fall vegetables will be delicious on **World Pasta Day**, the 25th. If eating your vegetables makes you feel a little too pure, indulge a bit on the 21st with **National Pumpkin Cheesecake Day**.

It's also **Seafood Month**. Make plans to grill up some shrimp or swordfish before it gets too cold to cook outdoors. If it turns cold and rainy, you can always sauté or roast your favorite seafood or make a cozy chowder. Sounds delicious.

A bunch of new films hit theaters this month. All the better to enjoy **National Popcorn Popping Month**. Forget the milk duds and jujubes, munch on some popcorn and let the magic of Hollywood take you away.

And finally, drum roll please, one of my favorite holidays – **Halloween** comes at the end of the month. But more about that later ...

... in the meantime, happy October and bon appétit!





Autumn Vegetable Chili

Bring a batch of spicy chili to your next tailgate party or potluck supper. Enjoy!

Serves 12

About 2 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded and chopped

3-4 carrots, peeled and chopped

3-4 celery stalks, chopped

2 onions, chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced

Olive oil

6 cups cooked small white beans, rinsed and drained

2 teaspoons ground cumin

1/2 teaspoon dried chipotle chili flakes or to taste

1 teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 bay leaf

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

3 cups crushed tomatoes

1-2 cups vegetable stock or water

1 cup dry white wine

1-2 bunches (about 1 pound) Swiss chard, roughly chopped or baby spinach

Garnish: toasted pumpkin seeds and fresh chopped cilantro

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Working in batches, sauté the vegetables in a little olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until lightly browned.

Transfer the vegetables to a large casserole and add the beans, spices and herbs. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, vegetable stock and wine. Bring the chili to a simmer over medium-high heat, cover and cook in a 350 degree oven for 30-40 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

Can be made ahead to this point. Cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate. Bring to a simmer over medium heat on the stovetop and continue with the recipe.

Add the Swiss chard to the chili and stir to combine. Return to the oven and cook for 5-10 minutes more.

Serve the chili in shallow bowls garnished with pumpkin seeds and chopped cilantro.