8: Veganize It (dinner/dessert)

Vegan is a term used to describe someone who abstains from the use and consumption of animal products, including: meat, eggs, dairy, and other products derived from animals. While this may seem like an “impossible” diet, the choice to go vegan is more than a dietary decision. Many individuals choose to go vegan for health reasons as well as ethical and moral reasons. The vegan lifestyle is full of delicious meals, sweet alternatives, and amazing benefits. Start exploring the world of “veganism”. Test out this vegan dinner recipe and finish the meal with a typical desert that tastes just as good as the non-vegan version!

Recipe:

**Cilantro Quinoa Burgers**

**Ingredients**
- 1/4 cup dry quinoa
- 1/2 cup water
- pinch of salt
- 1 (15 oz.) can of black beans
- 1/2 cup plain vegan breadcrumbs (or find a substitution, such as almond flour)
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- 2 tbs. red onion, minced
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

**Procedure**
1. In a small saucepan, stir together the quinoa, water, and pinch of salt
2. Bring the mixture to a boil and then reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes, until the quinoa absorbs all the water. Set the quinoa aside, covered.
3. Place the black beans in a bowl, and mash gently with a fork.
4. Stir in the remaining ingredients, including the cooked quinoa (but not the olive oil). Mix until well combined.
5. Shape the mixture into five patties
6. Heat the olive oil in a heavy skillet and add the quinoa patties.
7. Cook the patties for 2-3 minutes on each side until heated through.
8. Serve and enjoy! Instead of using normal bread buns, consider these vegan alternatives for buns: lettuce, eggplant slices, tomatoes slices, portobello mushrooms, or sweet potatoes.

**Vegan Chocolate Chip Cookies**
(This recipe comes from *Chocolate Covered Katie*, which is an amazing resource for all types of vegan sweets and savory treats!)

**Ingredients**
- 1 cup white, oat, or spelt flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup all natural/ organic sugar (or coconut sugar)
- 1/4 cup all natural/ organic brown sugar (or add more coconut sugar)
- 1/3 cup chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp almond milk, plus more if needed (or use a different vegan milk alternative)
- 2 tbsp coconut oil (or use a neutral oil such as vegetable oil)
- 1/4 tsp pure vanilla extract

**Procedure**
1. Combine all dry ingredients in a bowl
2. Then stir in the wet ingredients to form a dough – it will be dry at first, so keep stirring until a cookie-dough texture is achieved. If needed, add 1-2 tbsp extra milk of choice.
3. Form into one big ball, then either refrigerate at least 1 hour or freeze until the dough is cold.
4. Once dough is chilled, preheat oven to 325 F.
5. Form dough balls, and place on a greased baking tray, leaving enough room between cookies for them to spread.
6. Bake 11 minutes on the center rack. They’ll look underdone when you take them out. Let them cool on the baking tray 10 minutes before touching, during which time they will firm up.
7. NOTE: If for whatever reason the cookies don't spread enough, simply press down with a spoon after baking!