

Bread-Free Stuffing Balls

Vegan, gluten-free, soy-free

By Angela Liddon

My recipe tester Nicole likes to call these “bread-free stuffing balls,” and I think I would have to agree! These festive bites have all the flavours of traditional stuffing, but they’re protein-packed, bite-sized, and gluten-free as well. This is a new and improved version of my popular [Lentil Mushroom Walnut Balls](#) recipe. I’ve streamlined the procedure and provided a make-ahead version in the Tips below. This recipe moves quickly using quite a few components, so my advice is to gather all of the ingredients and do as much prep as you can before you begin. If you aren’t a cranberry sauce fan, my [Vegan Mushroom Gravy](#) is a nice option too!

Yield 14 to 15 balls	Prep time 30 Minutes	Cook time 23 Minutes
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Ingredients:

For the Bread-Free Stuffing Balls:

- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 (8-ounce/225 g) package cremini mushrooms*
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups (50 g) stemmed kale leaves
- 1/2 cup (50 g) gluten-free rolled oats
- 1 (14-ounce/398 mL) can lentils, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup (100 g) walnut halves**
- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) dried thyme (or 2 teaspoons fresh)
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon dried rosemary (or 1/2 teaspoon fresh, minced)
- 1/3 cup (40 g) dried cranberries, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) ground flax
- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) water
- 2 1/2 teaspoons (12.5 mL) sherry vinegar
- 3/4 to 1 teaspoon fine sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the Cranberry-Pear Sauce:

- 2 cups (210 g) fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1 large (230 g) ripe pear, peeled and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) pure maple syrup
- Small pinch fine sea salt

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Add the oil to a large pot and turn heat to medium. Finely chop the mushrooms until they’re roughly the size of peas. Add chopped mushrooms to the pot along with minced garlic and a pinch of salt. Stir until combined. Sauté for about 6 to 8 minutes, until the water from the mushrooms cooks off, reducing heat to low if necessary to prevent burning.
3. Meanwhile, tear the kale into large pieces and place into a food processor. Pulse (do not process) the kale until finely chopped (pieces roughly the size of almonds), being careful not to overprocess it. Remove and place into a bowl for later.
4. To the processor (no need to clean it out!), add the rolled oats. Process the oats until they’re finely chopped and resemble coarse flour, about 30 seconds.
5. Add the drained lentils and walnuts to the processor bowl with the oat flour. Pulse the mixture, stopping to check on it every few pulses, until it’s coarsely chopped. Be sure not to overprocess it into a paste as you still want a lot of texture and crunchy walnut pieces. Set aside.
6. To the pot with the mushrooms and garlic, add the herbs and sauté for 30 seconds until fragrant. Stir in the kale and chopped dried cranberries, then turn off the heat.
7. Stir the flax and water together in a small cup (no need to let it sit).

8. Now add all of the food processor contents, vinegar, and flax mixture to the pot. Stir until thoroughly combined. The dough should be heavy and dense. Add salt and pepper to taste.
9. With lightly wet hands, shape and roll about 14 to 15 balls, roughly 3 to 4 tablespoons of dough each. Place them on the prepared baking sheet about two inches apart.
10. Bake for 22 to 24 minutes, until golden on the bottom and firm to touch. Remove and let cool for 5 minutes.
11. While the Bread-Free Stuffing Balls are baking, make the Cranberry-Pear Sauce. Add the cranberries, pear, maple syrup, and salt to a medium pot. Bring to a low boil over high heat and then reduce to medium. Simmer uncovered for 10 to 20 minutes until thickened. Use a potato masher to mash up the pear near the end of cooking, if desired.
12. Leftover balls can be refrigerated in an airtight container for a few days. To reheat, add oil to a skillet and fry over medium heat, tossing occasionally, until heated through.

Nutrition Information +

Tips:

* You can save a tiny bit of chopping time by buying sliced mushrooms instead of whole. You'll still need to dice them up finely, but it'll go a little faster with the first chop already done for you!

** You can toast the walnuts beforehand, but this step is optional. Preheat the oven to 325°F (165°C) and toast the walnuts on a baking sheet for 9 to 12 minutes, until lightly crisp and fragrant.

MAKE-AHEAD OPTIONS: You can store the uncooked balls in the fridge (tightly wrapped up on a plate) for up to 36 hours before baking so there's less fuss the day of a big meal. The uncooked balls can also be frozen in a freezer-safe zip bag for 1 to 2 weeks. To bake, simply pop the frozen balls on a prepared baking sheet and bake for 30 to 32 minutes (they need roughly 7 to 9 minutes more bake time when baking from frozen). The Cranberry-Pear Sauce can also be made 1 to 2 weeks in advance and frozen until ready to use.