

Have a 'veggie' Merry Christmas

Think of Christmas, and from a food perspective, visions of ham, roast chicken and curried goat come to mind. Quite meaty, eh?

But what about the vegetarians? Just because they don't eat meat doesn't mean their food can't be just as festive and exciting.

"Vegetarians have to be creative and try to make sure it's tasty," said Yvonne Hope, owner of vegetarian haven, Ashanti Oasis restaurant in Hope Gardens, St Andrew. "What's important when you prepare the dishes is how you marinate them (the ingredients). You don't want your food to be bland and tasteless," she continued. And that sentiment probably goes double for the Yuletide season. So Hope and her chefs produced a colourful ensemble of entrées, side dishes and juices to make your meatless meal just as delectable.

Among the dishes brought out were Veggie Balls with 'a seductive Ashanti sauce'. Hope also suggested that sorrel sauce be used to commemorate the season. Lion Pie, despite its name, is not a dessert. According to Hope, it's more of an entrée but can also be a side dish. The 'pie' is a creamy combination of crushed sweet potatoes with a layer of callaloo embedded in it. The mix is then oven-baked.

Next up was Roast Gluten (she specified that this one had wholewheat flour). Gluten, as vegetarians know, is a sort of 'imitation meat'. So, for your Christmas table, you can roast or smoke it, and then add natural mustard or honey to give it that flavour. Remember, nothing blah around here! Red Peas Loaf is as advertised, a delightful side meal with the popular Jamaican pea packed inside. Plus, Hope said peas (whether red or otherwise) are great if you're tired of, or just don't like tofu.

And what's dinner without something to wash it all down? The tempting treats were complemented by roots carrot wine (which allegedly puts pep in the step) and a vitamin-enriched sorrel and passion fruit mix. Enjoy! - jamaicagleaner