Vegetarian Braised Winter Vegetables

A hearty and flavorful dish perfect for cold evenings, celebrating the natural sweetness and textures of winter vegetables.

Ingredients

Vegetables (serves 4-6):

- 4-5 varieties of winter vegetables, about 1.5–2 kg total:
- Root vegetables: Carrots (3), parsnips (2), turnips (2), or rutabagas (1 large).
- Squash: Butternut squash (½ small) or acorn squash.
- Alliums: Pearl onions (10–12) or shallots (3, halved).
- Leafy greens: Kale or Swiss chard (2 large leaves, optional, added at the end).

Broth:

- 3 cups vegetable broth (preferably low-sodium).
- ½ cup dry white wine (optional for extra depth).

Aromatics and Seasonings:

- 3 garlic cloves, minced.
- 1 small leek or onion, thinly sliced.
- 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1 tablespoon unsalted butter (or vegan butter).
- 2 sprigs thyme or 1 teaspoon dried thyme.
- 1 bay leaf.
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional).
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste.

Preparation and Cooking Steps

1. **Prepare the Vegetables:**
    - Peel and cut root vegetables into evenly-sized chunks (about 1.5-inch pieces).
    - If using squash, remove seeds and cut into similar-sized chunks.
    - Blanch pearl onions in boiling water for 2 minutes, then peel.
2. **Sauté Aromatics:**
    - Heat olive oil and butter in a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat.
    - Sauté the garlic, leek, or onion until fragrant and translucent, about 3 minutes.
3. **Add Vegetables:**
    - Add the root vegetables and squash to the pot. Sauté for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, to lightly brown the edges.
4. **Deglaze and Braise:**
    - Pour in the white wine (if using) and scrape the bottom of the pot to deglaze. Let the wine

reduce slightly.
    - Add vegetable broth, thyme, bay leaf, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper. The liquid should just cover the vegetables.
5. **Simmer:**
    - Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, then reduce heat to low.
    - Cover and let it simmer for 20–25 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender but not mushy. Stir occasionally.
6. **Finish:**
    - Remove the thyme sprigs and bay leaf.
    - If using leafy greens, stir them in during the last 5 minutes of cooking.

Serving Suggestions

- **Grains:** Serve with wild rice, white rice, or quinoa for a hearty and nutritious meal.
- **Bread:** Pair with a crusty baguette or rustic sourdough bread for dipping into the flavorful broth.
- **Salad:** A light green salad with a lemon vinaigrette complements the rich flavors of the braised vegetables.

Tips and Variations

1. Add a splash of balsamic vinegar or lemon juice at the end for brightness.
2. Top with chopped fresh parsley or chives for color and flavor.
3. For a creamier texture, mash a portion of the vegetables into the broth before serving.

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