5 FAST VEGETARIAN DINNERS FOR EARLY FALL

1. Spicy Escarole with Croutons and Eggs
Cut good-quality bread into one-inch cubes; toss the bread with two tablespoons of olive oil, salt and pepper, and (if you like) a bit of dried oregano, or garlic. Toast them until golden, about three or four minutes. Cook a bunch of chopped escarole in two tablespoons of butter for about five minutes, or until wilted. Toss the escarole with the croutons, a pinch or two of red chile flakes, freshly squeezed lemon juice, olive oil, and freshly grated Parmesan cheese. Serve the greens and croutons in bowls with a fried, soft-boiled or poached egg on top, along with more Parmesan.

2. Greek-Style Eggplant Salad
Heat a broiler or grill (you can use a grill pan, but you'll have to work in batches). Slice an eggplant into quarter-inch rounds; brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Broil or grill until seared on both sides and soft in the center, about five minutes. Thinly slice a small red onion. Put the eggplant, onion slices, crumbled feta cheese, a handful of pitted black olives (oil-cured are good here), and chopped fresh oregano in a bowl. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper and serve over greens along with a big squeeze of lemon.

3. Spiced Vegetables With Raisins
In a couple tablespoons of olive oil, cook a sliced zucchini; a carrot (chopped into one-inch rounds); a couple garlic cloves, lightly crushed; a teaspoon each of cumin and ginger; half a teaspoon cinnamon; and some salt. Cook for about three minutes. Add a small can of tomato paste and a half cup or so of water, and stir until blended. Add two cups of precooked chickpeas (canned are fine), a handful or two of raisins, the juice of a lemon, and a little more water if necessary; cover and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until the carrot is tender, about five minutes; then adjust the seasoning and serve. (To make this a little more festive, serve on a bed of couscous topped with fresh mint and chopped pistachios.)

4. Zucchini and Garlic Fusilli With Pistachios
Boil salted water for the fusilli and cook it; meanwhile, slice two zucchinis into thin disks (equally delicious is a combination of zucchini and yellow summer squash). Toast a handful of pistachios in a dry pan until just fragrant and turning golden; set aside. Cook some minced garlic in a couple of tablespoons of olive oil until fragrant, add the zucchini slices and two tablespoons of water, season with salt and pepper, and cook until soft. Drain the pasta, reserving the cooking water. Toss the zucchini and garlic mixture with the pasta, adding more olive oil and water if needed; add the toasted nuts and serve with grated Parmesan cheese and plenty of freshly ground pepper.
5. Chile Sweet Potato Soup
Peel about a pound of sweet potatoes and grate or mince them in the food processor. Cook a couple minced cloves of garlic, some diced onion, and a chopped fresh chile in some olive oil until tender; stir in the sweet potatoes and add enough water to cover by about an inch. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a vigorous simmer, partially cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sweet potatoes are tender. Stir in some fresh or dried sage and season with salt and pepper. Puree if you like, then add a splash of cream, heat through, and serve with croutons.