

Biker Information Guide

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Biker Billy hosts a syndicated television cooking show

"Biker Billy Cooks with Fire"

Fat Tires or Flat Tires



Recently I had to take a case of cookbooks to UPS in town. Since Mary was home, I asked her if she wanted to ride along while I did a couple of errands. With the price of gas these days, I try to combine a few stops into every trip. She was happy to get out of the house but insisted we take her truck, as my air conditioning doesn't work. I could get it fixed but the dogs and I prefer to ride with the windows down. What do you expect, bikers and dogs always enjoy the wind in our furry faces.

So off we went in air-conditioned comfort. Along the way we decided that we would have dinner at our favorite Chinese restaurant's weekly vegetarian buffet, which would open just about when we would finish our errands. However, there was no line at UPS and we were done in record time. With a great routing plan, efficient stops, and light traffic, we finished two hours before the buffet opened. We had to fill two hours, or else forget the buffet and head back up the mountain.

That is when we decided that, since it was matinee time and mid-week, we could catch the new summer blockbuster Batman movie and still make it to the buffet—couldn't plan a date night that easy if we tried. During the movie Batman rides this gadget-festooned motorcycle. While admiring the cool traffic-clearing ordnance it had on the front-end (sure would have liked that when I commuted in NYC), I couldn't help but notice the totally-too-fat tires on the bike.

I mean, really, Hollywood—come on. Those square profile fat porkers of a tire might be usable on a four-wheeler Bat-attack-mobile, but they were way too beefy for good handling on a motorcycle. I know it is a movie based on a comic book hero, all fiction, but it just looked so wrong. It must have been some sort of premonition-like, *deja-vu* thing going on. While I was thinking about riding on fat tires with those bike-mounted weapons systems back in my Gotham City commuter days, it was a whole other tire message I should have been getting.

I got the real message when we came out of the movie and found that Mary's truck had a flat. No big deal: I have changed many a tire in my day. The only problem was we discovered that her truck had all the tire-changing tools except the jack itself. Well, there is a reason I have AAA, and it ain't because of their support of motorcycle rights. After a phone call, a moderate wait, and the wrecker arriving and changing the tire, it was too late for the buffet.

While driving home and talking about fat and flat tires and riding motorcycles in city traffic, I remembered the last time I had a flat tire on the bike I had in those mad urban days. It was in a rustic campground on the Oregon coast in the late 1980s, long before cell phones were affordable or common. There was no calling for help on that Sunday morning. It had been fine when I parked it and set up camp the night before, but just like

tonight it had gone completely flat while parked, with the bike piled high with camping gear. On most bikes it would have been the beginning of a long ordeal, even for someone like me that always has fix-a-flat cans in my saddlebags. Even two big cans would not fully inflate a tire that flat.

But I was in luck that day: The bike was a Goldwing, a silver Honda like Mary's truck, yet the bike was better equipped than the truck for handling flats. It had a built-in air compressor for adjusting the front and rear suspensions and an outlet for the air hose conveniently provided in the tool kit. A few minutes of air and I had a round tire again. It took longer to unpack and repack the bike, yet I was road-worthy in less time than today. I have always taken checking my tire pressure seriously, especially on bikes. On that cross-country road trip, I had even installed valve caps with an indicator that claimed it would go from green to red if the pressure dropped even a minor amount. Upon a careful examination, I discovered it was actually the gizmo that had leaked out the air overnight. Since then, I rely upon frequent use of a quality tire gauge. I would suggest that before you ride, check your tire pressure as fat rides better than flat.

Hot Garbanzo Beans with Sun-Dried Tomatoes

I like to ride around and find new roads; I can spend all day just wandering and looking for that special curve or an unexpected vista. One of the beauties of riding is taking the time to explore. I approach cooking the same way – some days I just open the cabinets and see what I can put together. This simple side dish is one of those unexpected curves in the kitchen. Try it and find a new vista for your tongue.

2 tablespoons olive oil
4 sun-dried tomatoes, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
½ medium onion, thinly sliced
½ to 1 dried New Mexico pepper, stemmed and crushed
1 (16-ounce) can garbanzo beans
Water
Salt and black pepper

Heat the oil in a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add the sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, onion, and New Mexico peppers and sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the onion begins to brown. Add the garbanzo beans and continue to sauté for about five minutes, or until the garbanzos begin to brown. Add enough water to just cover the garbanzo beans, then stir well. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 5 minutes, or until the liquid is almost gone. Add salt and black pepper to taste and serve immediately.

Makes 4 Servings

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