



Middle Eastern Mezze Menu

Hibiscus kombucha spritz

Ottolenghi's filo spinach halloumi cigars

Butternut and tahini dip

Muhamarra on creamy hummus

Beetroot hummus

Garden tabbouleh

Quick fennel pickle

Za'atar eggs

Sweet potato galette

Sweet spiced mushroom and rice pilaf

Roasted potatoes batata harra & green zhoug

Lemony cauliflower with pine nuts over labneh

Grilled Confit parsnips with herbs

Flatbreads with za'atar

Ottolenghi's Chocolate Fridge cake

Persian Love Cake with rosewater marscapone

Cinnamon tea



Ottolenghi's spinach filo 'cigars' (Makes 21)

Ingredients:

7 sheets of French filo
¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup each parsley and mint, chopped
2 T sumac
2 tsp pomegranate molasses

For the filling:

3 red onions, diced
5 cloves garlic, minced
5 T olive oil
3 T sumac
1 tsp cinnamon
200 g spinach, blanched and chopped
½ cup pine nuts, toasted
1 ½ cups halloumi, grated
½ cup chopped mint
1 ½ cups feta, grated
Grated zest of one lemon

1. Make the filling by frying onions, adding garlic, then sumac and spinach. Add the rest of the filling ingredients and leave to cool.
2. Heat oven to 200c.
3. Take a sheet of filo with short side facing you. Cut the sheet lengthwise in 3.
4. Add 2 T of the filling toward one end. Tuck the sides over the filling, brush a little oil on the end, then roll all the way up into a cigar shape.
5. Place on a parchment lined sheet, brush with oil and sprinkle with sumac.
6. Bake for 25 minutes.
7. Serve with herbs and a drizzle of pomegranate molasses.



DIPS:

Butternut and tahini dip, adapted from *Jerusalem*

One large butternut squash (1.2 k), peeled and cubed and sprinkled with cinnamon and roasted for an hour at 200c for an hour, covered

70 g tahini paste

120 g Greek yoghurt

2 garlic cloves

1 tsp mixed sesame seeds

1.5 T date syrup

1 T chopped coriander

Method:

1. Transfer the roasted, cooled squash into a food processor with everything but the sesame seeds and coriander. Blend into a paste.
2. Spread on a platter and garnish with olive oil, sesame seeds, date syrup and chopped coriander.

Muhamarra, red capsicum and walnut dip

Muhammara is a spicy Levantine dip made from red peppers and walnuts. It keeps in the fridge for 3 days or a few months in the freezer.

Ingredients:

4 large red capsicum, roasted and peeled

3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped

1 mild red chilli, deseeded and chopped

150g walnuts, toasted, roughly chopped, plus 50g for garnish

2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses

4 tablespoons olive oil

Steps: Put all the ingredients except the lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, olive oil in a food processor and blend until very smooth. Add the lemon juice and pomegranate molasses, blend further then slowly stream in the olive oil.



Yotam Ottolenghi & Sami Tamimi's Creamy dreamy Hummus

Recipe adapted from *OTK*, p. 20

Ingredients

- 2 tins chickpeas and a pinch of cumin, simmered for 10 minutes to make them very soft, saving the liquid to add if needed
- 120 g tahini, hulled and light in colour if possible
- 1-2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 25 g ice cubes
- 1 pinch salt, to taste
- 1 dash good-quality olive oil, to serve (optional)

Method

1. While the chickpeas are still warm, spread out the chickpeas in between paper towels and rub off the skins as much as possible.
2. Add the chickpeas to a food processor and puree, slowly adding ice cubes.
3. Add tahini, garlic and lemon juice and any of the water from warming the chickpeas, if necessary. Resist the temptation to add olive oil because it will “simply mess with the holy matrimony of chickpea and sesame paste”. However, you can pour a generous amount of good-quality olive oil on top of the hummus once you’ve plated it.
4. Transfer the hummus to a shallow bowl, cover the surface with plastic wrap, and let it rest for at least 30 minutes. If not using straightaway, refrigerate until needed. Make sure to take it out of the fridge at least 30 minutes before serving. Optionally, to serve, top with a layer of good quality olive oil. This hummus will keep in the refrigerator for up to three days.



Roasted beetroot hummus

3 roasted beetroot
1 can cooked chickpeas (mostly drained // 1 can yields ~1 3/4 cup)
1 large lemon (zested)
1/2 large lemon (juiced)
1 healthy pinch salt and black pepper
2 large cloves garlic (minced)
2 heaping Tbsp tahini
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

Method:

1. Once your beet is cooled and peeled, quarter it and place it in your food processor. Blend until only small bits remain.
2. Add remaining ingredients except for olive oil and blend until smooth.
3. Drizzle in olive oil as the hummus is mixing.
4. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed, adding more salt, lemon juice, or olive oil if needed. If it's too thick, add a bit of water. Will keep in the fridge for up to a week



Labneh

750g thick Greek yoghurt and 1 T Salt

Toppings to roll balls in: za'atar, sumac, sesame, or chili flakes

Method:

1. To make the labneh: Place the Greek yoghurt in a cheese cloth, tie it with a string to compact it into a rough ball, add some salt and let it hang in your fridge above a container to catch the excess liquid. Leave it anywhere between 2-5 days. The longer you leave it, the thicker it will turn out.
2. When ready, transfer to a container and store in the fridge up to 7 days. Mix with a spoon to loosen slightly before using.
3. If you'd like to make balls with the labne, oil your hands and roll labne into large marble-sized balls. Coat with toppings of your choice. Go for variety and colour so use za'atar, sumac or sesame. You can store labne balls in olive oil in the fridge. Remove from fridge a few hours before serving or the oil will be hard.



Kale tabbouleh

I was inspired by the Nov 2022 Cuisine magazine recipe from Marc Weir “freekeh Kale Tabbouleh”. I adapted the recipe and changed some things and the result was sooo delicious! I made it last week for a vegan friend who was getting out of hospital and there’s currently lots of cavolo nero in the garden. When it’s chopped finely as in this tabbouleh, it’s so easy to eat lots of kale! There are also all the usual tabbouleh flavours: mint, parsley, lemon, olive oil, a few spices to give it sweetness (allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg). Sharpen your knives and start chopping!

Ingredients:

1 cup bulgar wheat, boiled till just done (leave a bit of bite to it)
80 g kale, finely chopped
40 g parsley, finely chopped
40 g mint, finely chopped
One red onion chopped, or a few spring onions, chopped
½ cucumber

Dressing:

½ cup olive oil
¼ lemon juice
2 garlic cloves, crushed
½ tsp allspice
½ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg
1 tsp salt
Black pepper

Method:

Put cold bulgar in a bowl with the chopped veg and herbs. Mix and add the dressing, then mix again. You may need to adjust the flavours, maybe add more salt, lemon or whatever you think it needs to balance the acidity.



Sweet Potato Galettes adapted from Ottolenghi

Ingredients

- 1 large sweet potato, cut into thin slices
- 2 sheets savoury puff pastry (I use Panneton brand and cut them into 2 circles)
- 1 free-range egg, lightly beaten
- 3-5 tablespoons (100 ml) sour cream or crème fraîche
- 3 1/2 tablespoons (100 g) aged goat cheese or feta
- 1 onion, sliced and sautéed until golden
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 teaspoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Fennel seeds for garnish
- Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F / 200°C.. Roast slices of sweet potato then trim so they are small. (no larger than a thumb's width)
2. Coat one of the pastry rounds with cream and fried onion and slices of sweet potato and some cheese.
3. Cover that one with a second round of pastry. Place a small cup in the centre to mark the 'center' of the sun. With scissors, make cuts into the centre point, like rays of the sun. Gently pulling, twist each ray until you have a whole pastry 'sun'.
4. Brush with egg wash, and sprinkle with fennel seeds.
5. Bake for 20—30 minutes until the pastry puffs up and is nicely brown. (check the base to make sure it's cooked before removing from oven)



Quick fennel pickle

Fennel is a healthy veg that doesn't get enough love but it does in the Mediterranean where it grows wild all over the countryside. You can eat every part of the fennel plant, from the bulb, to the stalks, fronds, and seeds. And although raw fennel has a distinct licorice flavor, pickling brings out the vegetable's natural sweetness. So if you're on the fence about this crunchy bulb, give this recipe a try. Pickles are a standard element of a mezze dish, providing fresh, crunchy, acidic flavour and digestive component. Here quick pickling softens their texture while maintaining that natural crunch. Tangy vinegar and subtle spices elevate plain vegetables to a gourmet status. Keep in the refrigerator and consume within a month.

- fennel seeds (of course!)
- mustard seeds
- bulb fennel, (use 2 bulbs if they are small)
- 1 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar, or white wine vinegar
- 1 1/4 cup water
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp fennel seeds
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/2 tsp black peppercorns

INSTRUCTIONS

- Trim the top stalks from the fennel, reserving some of the fronds. Trim the root end and peel any tough outer layers away.
- Slice the trimmed bulb very thinly (1/8 inch) on a mandoline slicer, or with a very sharp knife.
- Fit the fennel slices tightly into a wide mouth quart mason jar. I like to add a few fennel fronds into the jar as well
- Put the vinegar and water in a small saucepan with the spices. Heat to a boil, then pour everything into the jar with the fennel. Make sure the fennel is completely covered with pickling liquid. If not, add a little more water to top off.
- Let cool at room temperature, then cap and refrigerate. It's ready to enjoy as soon as it's chilled, and will keep up to a month, refrigerated.



Sweet spiced mushroom and rice pilaf, adapted from Ottolenghi, *OTK*

This robust vegan main scores major points for its liberal use of warming spices and both fresh and dried mushrooms. It's really quite a festive dish, suitable for the cooler months,

30 g dried porcini

500 ml broth (see below)

1 kilo fresh mushrooms (whatever is available such as brown mushrooms, portobello)

1 large onion

10 garlic cloves

3 cinnamon sticks

4 whole star anise

150 dried apricots

350 basmati rice, washed until the water runs clear

3 string onion

5 g parsley

Salt and pepper

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 220c fan forced.
2. Put the stock, dried mushroom and 350ml water into a saucepan with 1 tsp salt and some freshly ground pepper. Bring to a simmer and then turn off heat.
3. Put onion, garlic, apricots and spices in a roasting tin with 120 ml oil, 1 tsp salt and freshly ground pepper and stir. Bake for 40 minutes, stirring halfway through until well browned.
4. Remove from the oven and transfer about half the mixture to a medium bowl. Stir the rice into the remaining mixture in the roasting tin, and set aside.
5. Bring the porcini mixture back up to a simmer. Pour this over the rice mixture and, without stirring, cover the tin tightly with foil. Bake for 25 minutes, until the rice is cooked through. Leave to sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Remove the foil and gently mix everything together.
6. Add the spring onions, parsley and remaining 2 tablespoons of oil to the reserved mushroom mixture, stirring to combine. Spoon this over the rice and serve.



Simple Porcini mushroom broth (for the pilaf)

Dried mushrooms bring a rich depth to quick broths. This one's simple and comforting, and you can tweak it with whatever's on hand—veg scraps, ginger slices, even dried seaweed if you fancy. The beauty of vegetable broths is that they don't need much time.

Ingredients

- 30g dried porcini mushrooms
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 150g fennel trimmings
- ¼ tsp black peppercorns
- Fine sea salt

1. Place all ingredients in a saucepan with 2L cold water and 1½ tsp salt.
2. Bring to a boil, then reduce to medium and simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Strain, reserving the mushrooms if needed. Discard the rest of the solids.



Lemony cauliflower over labneh

In restaurants all over Israel, you'll find deep-fried cauliflower or *cruvit*, its edges crisp, its sweetness intensified by high heat. I oven-roast it instead and add a generous lashing of lemon juice before roasting, which helps the lemony punch permeate every bite. Serving the warm cauli over cool, creamy labne allows you to multiply the number of textures and flavours you get in one bite.

1 medium cauliflower (we are multiplying x4)
¼ cup olive oil
1 lemon, zested and juiced
¼ tsp dried red pepper flakes or Aleppo pepper
¼ cup dried barberries
¼ cup toasted pine nuts
1 garlic clove, minced
Chopped parsley for garnish

Method

1. Preheat oven to 450F
2. Halve and core the cauli and cut into florets.
3. In a bowl, toss the florets with oil and half the lemon juice and zest, salt and pepper and dried red pepper flakes.
4. Spread evenly over a large tray and roast for about 20 minutes until it starts to char.
5. Move around the florets and roast another 10 minutes until the cauli is golden and crispy.
6. Remove from the oven and add the remaining lemon, barberries, pine nuts. Toss. Taste, and season.
7. To serve, stir the garlic into the labne and spread in a shallow bowl. Place the cauli in the center of the platter and garnish with chopped parsley.



Ottolenghi's Favorite Potatoes: Batata Harra, Spicy Middle Eastern Roasted Potatoes

A Lebanese and Syrian dish that Ottolenghi says is "probably his favorite way with potatoes", adapted from *Plenty More*

- 1 pound agria potatoes unpeeled
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sunflower oil
- 3 large garlic cloves peeled, crushed and minced
- 1 teaspoon harissa
- 1/2 teaspoon red chili flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 roasted red capsicum, chopped into 1/2 inch pieces
- 1/4 cup chopped coriander
- Grated zest of 1 lemon plus 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 230c. Wash and cut potatoes into 1 inch cubes. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil, add the potatoes and cook for three minutes. Drain in a colander. Return the pot to the stove over a low flame. Add potatoes back to the pot in two batches to cook off any remaining moisture, stirring so the potatoes don't stick. Transfer to a bowl.
2. Combine the two oils, 1/2 teaspoon of harissa and ground pepper, and drizzle over the potatoes. Stir gently to coat the potatoes. Line a rimmed baking sheet with baking paper, spread the potatoes in a single layer. Put them in the oven to roast and, after 10 minutes, stir in the garlic, remaining 1/2 teaspoon of harissa, chili flakes, red bell pepper.
3. Return to the oven for another 20 minutes, until the potatoes are tender and nicely browned. Stir once halfway through the cooking. Remove the potatoes from the oven and transfer to a large bowl. Stir in the lemon zest and lemon juice.
4. Serve warm or at room temperature, add chopped coriander just before serving.



Easy Gluten-Free Flatbread Recipe

This soft and delicious gluten-free flatbread only requires 5 simple ingredients and is ready to eat in about 30 minutes. Pair with your favorite curries, soups, or use as a sandwich wrap or pizza base. The options are endless!

Ingredients

- 1 1/3 cups (240g) unsweetened Greek yogurt
- 8 teaspoons (36g) olive oil
- 2 teaspoons (9g) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (9g) salt
- 2 cups + 1 1/2 tablespoons (314g) gf flour + more as needed

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, mix together the yogurt, olive oil, baking powder and salt until uniform.
2. Sprinkle the gluten-free flour over the wet mixture and mix it through until a dough forms. The goal here is to have a smooth and soft dough that does not crumble and that is not too sticky. If the dough is too sticky, add additional flour, 1/2 tablespoon at a time, as needed. If the dough is too dry, add water, 1/2 tablespoon at a time, as needed.
3. Flour a clean work surface and preheat a greased pan over medium heat. We prefer to use a cast iron griddle or skillet for this as we have found it yields the best results vs. a non-stick pan. We also prefer to use our granite counters, a marble board or plastic cutting boards instead of a wooden one as we have found that it sticks less.
4. Divide the dough into 8 and roll each into a ball. Place 1 ball on the floured work surface and using a rolling pin or an empty bottle, roll out the dough until it is about 1/4-inch thick. Transfer the dough onto the heated pan and cook for 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 minutes on each, or until browned and cooked through. Check the dough after 1 1/2 minutes to ensure that it is not burning. If it cooks too fast, lower your heat as needed. We often find that our first flatbread becomes the test for proper heat level/cooking time and the remaining flatbreads cook more efficiently and successfully.
5. Transfer the cooked flatbread to a plate. If desired, brush it with the olive oil and give it a generous sprinkle of parsley.
6. Continue until you have cooked all of the dough. Serve warm. Store in an airtight container on the counter for 4-6 days.



Confit and grilled parsnips with herbs and vinegar

These parsnips are intensely flavoured with vinegar, chilli and smoke from the grill, which adds a wonderful dimension but isn't strictly essential, so skip the charring stage if you want to save time. Be sure to keep the oil that you're left with, and use it to dress salads or to drizzle over dips or mezze.

Ingredients

- 2 red chillies, thinly sliced at a slight angle
- 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 750g medium parsnips, peeled and halved lengthways
- 11 garlic cloves, peeled – 10 left whole, 1 crushed
- 450ml olive oil
- 4 tbsp coriander leaves, roughly chopped
- 3 tbsp parsley leaves, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- flaked sea salt and black pepper

Method

1. Heat the oven to 180C (160C fan). Put the chillies, vinegar and a small pinch of flaked salt in a medium bowl and leave to pickle lightly.
2. Put the parsnips, whole garlic cloves, oil and a tablespoon of flaked salt in a 30cm x 20cm high-sided baking dish, cover tightly with foil, then roast for an hour, or until a knife slides easily into the thicker part of the parsnips. Use a slotted spoon to lift out the parsnips and garlic, and reserve the oil.
3. Put a well-greased griddle pan on a high heat and ventilate your kitchen. Once hot, grill the parsnips in two or three batches for about two to three minutes a batch, turning them once, until deeply charred on both sides. Transfer to a large bowl while you continue with the rest. Grill the garlic cloves for a minute, or until charred on both sides, then add to the parsnip bowl.
4. Put the herbs, crushed garlic, 60ml of the reserved parsnip oil, a quarter-teaspoon of flaked salt and a good grind of pepper in a small food processor and blitz until finely chopped. Stir this and the allspice into the pickled chillies.
5. Add the herb mixture to the parsnip bowl, tossing gently to combine, then transfer to a large platter, arranging the parsnips cut side up and all pointing in the same direction. Drizzle with two more tablespoons of the parsnip oil and serve warm or at room temperature.



Ottolenghi's zhoug:

Zhoug! Meet my latest condiment obsession, also known as zhug or skhug, and pronounced "zoog." It's a bright, spicy cilantro sauce that originated in Yemen. Zhoug has gained popularity across the Middle East. You'll find it drizzled over your falafel in Israel.

35g coriander
20g parsley
2 green chillies
½ tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp ground cardamom
⅛ tsp sugar
¼ tsp salt
2 garlic cloves, crushed
3 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp water

To make the zhoug, put all the ingredients in a food processor and blitz to a smooth paste.



Za'atar eggs from my Egyptian chef friend AJ Takla

7 eggs
1.5 T lemon juice
3 T olive oil
1 T za'atar
1 pinch cayenne

Method:

1. Boil eggs for 6.5 minutes then plunge into ice cold water.
2. You can either peel the eggs and slice them lengthwise, or AJ likes to break the eggs in half using hands to get scraggly uneven pieces.
3. Place on serving platter and whisk lemon, oil, za'atar and salt in a bowl, and then drizzle over the eggs.
4. Finish with a sprinkling of cayenne, if desired (or paprika), and season with salt and pepper.



Pistachio chocolate fridge cake (adapted from Ottolenghi's *Simple*)

500 g dark chocolate
180 g unsalted butter
140 g golden syrup
Pinch salt
150 g raisins soaked in 2 T rum
180 g digestive biscuits, roughly broken into 2 cm pieces
100 g pistachios, chopped

Method:

1. Line a 28 x 18 cm baking tray
2. Put chocolate, butter, golden syrup and salt into large bowl and set over saucepan of hot, gently simmering water.
3. Melt until combined.
4. Add the raisins and rum, biscuits and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pistachios.
5. Combine everything and spread onto prepared tray.
6. Smooth the top and sprinkle pistachios on top.
7. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or until set.
8. Cut into bars. You should get 24.

Persian love cake

Think those golden baklava-ish flavours, but in a moist cake with sticky, dark caramelised sides. This is a cake to make if you are usually bad at making cakes. Two plusses: it uses a muffin method (what I call a 'bung-in-and-stir'), which requires very little to no technique, and is a wonderful gluten-free option.

Ingredients

Crumb base

- 300 g (10½ oz/3 cups) almond meal
- 185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar
- 220 g (7¾ oz/1 cup firmly packed) soft brown sugar
- 120 g (4¼ oz) unsalted butter, melted

Cake batter



- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 250 g (9 oz/scant 1 cup) natural or Greek-style yoghurt
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 2 tsp rosewater
- 25 saffron threads
- 3 tbsps flaked almonds
- 3 tbsps pistachio nut kernels, roughly chopped

To decorate (optional)

- unsprayed edible rose petals

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C (325°F) fan-forced. Grease the ring of a 24 cm (9½ inch) springform tin, then line with strips of baking paper. Turn the base upside down, so it no longer has a lip. Place a piece of baking paper over it, then clamp the ring around it to secure.
2. To make the crumb base, combine the almond meal, caster sugar, brown sugar and butter in a large mixing bowl, and rub together until you have an even, sandy consistency. Divide the mixture in two, and tip half into the prepared tin. Using the back of a spoon or a spatula, press the crumb mixture evenly over the bottom of the tin.
3. To make the cake batter, add the eggs, yoghurt, salt, cardamom, rosewater and saffron to the remaining crumb mixture and whisk until there are no lumps. Pour over the crumb base and sprinkle the flaked almonds and pistachio nuts over the top. Bake for about 20 minutes until golden and fully risen – you will know because the top will probably crack a little. If the top is colouring too quickly, cover with foil, then bake for a further 20 minutes. The centre of the cake should spring back when pressed gently. Cool completely, before removing from the tin and cutting to serve. Lovely decoration ideas are edible rose petals, sliced fresh figs and a very light dusting of icing sugar. Serve with a dollop of Greek style yoghurt or rosewater marscapone crème fraîche!