

Muhamarra dip

- 4 large red peppers, roasted and peeled
- 5 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:

1. Put all the ingredients except the lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, olive oil in a food processor and blend until very smooth.
2. Add the lemon juice and pomegranate molasses, blend further then slowly stream in the olive oil.
3. To serve: Spread thick layer over a flat plate, making a dip in the middle. Fill the dip with the remaining olive oil, sprinkle with chopped walnuts

Labneh

750g thick Greek yoghurt

Salt

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

Steps:

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. Oil your hands and roll labne into large marble-sized balls. Coat with toppings of your choice. Go for variety and colour!

Beetroot tzatziki

The key to a great tzatziki is stripping the cucumber of all its moisture so it remains crunchy and fresh. We love the earthy sweetness that beetroot brings to this classic Greek dish.

200 g fresh beetroot (baby ones, if you can get them), trimmed
Small piece of cucumber, grated
1 t salt
200 g natural Greek yoghurt
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 T lemon juice

Steps::

1. Preheat oven to 180C
2. Wrap each beetroot bulb in foil. Place on a baking tray and bake for 45-50 minutes until tender. Once cooled, grate the beetroot. (you can use a food processor to save your hands getting pink!)
3. Meanwhile, place the cucumber and salt in a colander and allow to drain for 10 minutes. Squeeze to remove excess liquid and place in a bowl.
4. Add remaining ingredients, stir to combine, and taste. Season as necessary with salt.
5. Store in the refrigerator no longer than 24 hours. Can be eaten cold or room temp.

Note: if your beetroot has leaves attached, don't throw them away! They are super tasty and good for your kidneys. Make a salad or sautee them with olive oil.

Hummus two ways

First way (classic):

250g dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in water + 1 tsp of baking soda
1 tbs salt, plus more for seasoning
270g tahina
60ml lemon juice

2 garlic cloves 100ml iced
water

Steps:

1. Add your soaked chickpeas and 1 tbsp of salt into a pot and cover with water. Cook for about 30-40 minutes, making sure to skim the foam that appears on top, until the chickpeas are completely tender- you should be able to squish the chickpeas easily with no extra pressure.
2. Drain the chickpeas if using immediately, if not, keep it in the liquid to stay warm.
3. In a food processor, add the garlic, lemon juice and chickpeas (they should be warm!). Blitz it up until a relatively smooth paste is formed, depending on your food processor, anywhere between 3-5 minutes.
4. Now add the tahina and 1 tsp of salt and process until it's mixed in, then slowly drizzle in the water, you may not need all of it. Start with half the water and check the consistency before adding more.

To serve:

Spoon the hummus into a serving plate, adding a swoosh here and there
Garnish with good olive oil.

Second way (fattet humus)

250g dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in water + 1 tsp of baking soda
1 tbsp salt, plus more for seasoning
270g tahina
60ml lemon juice
2 garlic cloves
150g Greek yoghurt
100g warm chickpea liquid
3 pitas, torn into 2-3cm pieces and baked until golden
90ml olive oil
10g parsley leaves, finely chopped 10g
coriander leaves, finely chopped 2 lemons,
zest and juice both
1/2 tsp sumac 1/4 tsp
paprika

Steps:

1. Follow classic humus recipe but keep the chickpeas in the warm

liquid

2. To make pita chips: preheat oven to 180C. Mix pita pieces with 2 tbsp olive oil, pinch of salt, 1/2 tsp cumin, lay on a baking tray and bake for 10-20 minutes or until pita is golden and crispy.
3. To make the hummus: Place half the chickpeas, approximately 200g, in the food processor with the garlic and blitz until smooth paste. Add the yoghurt, Tahina, lemon juice, 1/2 tsp salt and blitz up. Add the warm liquid, half at first to check consistency.
4. To make the garnish: mix the chopped parsley, coriander, lemon zest, olive oil, and a small pinch of salt in a small bowl.

To serve:

In your serving dish, we'll begin layering. Start with half the hummus, then two thirds of the chickpeas, 3 tbsp of the cooking liquid, hummus, pita, then finally chickpeas. Garnish with the herb oil and dust with sumac and paprika.

Dolmeh - Persian stuffed silverbeet leaves

Fresh silverbeet leaves, trimmed, blanched

1/3 cup Jasmine rice, rinsed and boiled till just done

1/4 tsp salt & 1/4 tsp ground black pepper

1/4 cup yellow split peas, soaked overnight and cooked till just done

1 cup fresh herbs, chopped (mint, chervil, parsley, dill, etc)

1 medium yellow onion, sliced thin and fried to golden brown

1/4 cup olive oil, for frying the onion

3 cloves garlic, crushed

1/2 tsp turmeric powder

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

1 T dried barberries

25 g unsalted butter, melted (or olive oil for vegan)

1/2 cup hot water mixed with juice of 2 lemons + 2 T sugar

Steps:

1. Remove the stalks and the thickest part of the centre veins. Line the bottom of a 26 cm heavy saucepan (I use a Le Creuset) with baking paper and then any irregular-shaped leaves. Cut the other leaves into even portions, roughly 8 cm x 10 cm.
2. Place the silverbeet in a large bowl and pour over boiling hot water. Stand for 1-2 minutes to just soften, then drain well.

3. Make the filling (you can do this step a day in advance):
4. In a large bowl add the prepared herbs, crushed garlic, salt, spices, the split pea/rice mixture. Toss to combine.
5. Add the melted butter/oil and fried onions to the ingredients & toss
6. Take 1 softened leaf, making sure it is not broken (or you can use smaller pieces to patch any larger ones with holes), and place 1 tablespoon filling in the centre. Fold in the sides and roll up, gently squeezing to tighten as you roll. Squeeze out any excess juices into a bowl and reserve. Repeat the process.
7. Place the rolls, spine-side down and in firmly packed layers into the lined pan. Pour the squeezed-out juices into the pan and add salt, lemon juice and 125 ml (½ cup) water. Cover and bring to the boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 20- 25 minutes. Serve immediately or at room temperature with yoghurt or labneh.

Warm butter bean salad

- 3 cans butter bean, drained and washed
- 1/2 cup good olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed or sliced thinly
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 zest of lemon, peeled into stripes
- 1/2 tsp chilli flakes
- A couple sprigs of thyme
- 1-2 tsp salt

Steps:

1. Add all the ingredients except for the beans into a medium saucepan and let it warm up over gentle heat.
2. Once the oil is fragrant, about 5-10 minutes, add the beans and let it sit and marinate for about 10 minutes before turning off the heat and letting it sit to continue marinating.
3. Transfer into a serving bowl
4. To serve: Transfer into a pretty serving dish. Garnish with lemon zest and extra chilli flakes to top. If there are fresh herbs available (mint, parsley, dill, etc), feel free to garnish with this as well.

Salad-e Shirazi

Named for the city in southwestern Iran, salad-e Shirazi is found on practically every Iranian table at practically every meal. It should be bright, crunchy and tart, a nice counterpoint to rich, buttery rice and unctuous stews. Toss the cucumbers, onion, herbs and tomatoes with the lime vinaigrette just before serving to preserve their crunch. In Iran, dining companions usually fight over the leftover juice at the end of a meal.

Ingredients

- 3 to 4 Persian cucumbers or one telegraph
- Green onions or red onion
- 2 tablespoons any combination of finely chopped fresh parsley, coriander, basil or dill and mint
- Chopped ripe tomatoes
- ¼ cup verjuice or lime juice
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Steps:

1. Remove alternating stripes of peel on cucumbers and trim ends. Dice cucumbers into 1/4-inch pieces and place in a large bowl.
2. Chop the onion into slices. Chop the fresh herbs. Chop tomatoes into bite-sized pieces. Add to bowl.
3. In a small bowl, make a vinaigrette by whisking together 1/4 cup verjuice/lime juice, oil, 3/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Just before serving, dress vegetables with vinaigrette and stir to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and lime/verjuice as needed. Serve at room temperature or lightly chilled.

*This also works well served in lettuce cups. It's traditional in Iran to dip lettuce leaves into vinegar-flavoured drinks (sharbat) so the combination of lettuce with a vinegary dressing works well.

Batata harra

- 10 medium potatoes
- 6 tbsp olive oil
- 5 garlic cloves, minced 3 tsp coriander seeds

2 tsp chilli flakes
2 tsp coriander seeds
3 tsp turmeric powder
2 limes or lemons, juice and zest - save roughly 2 tsp for the garnish
2 cups fresh coriander (with stems), roughly chopped
1 cup parsley (with stems), roughly chopped
1 cup mint, roughly chopped
1 cup dill (with stems), roughly chopped
salt to taste
2 tbsp olive oil, for garnish

Steps:

1. Place the potatoes in a large pot with well salted cold water. Boil and cook for anywhere between 10-20 minutes until fully cooked through but still al dente.
2. Meanwhile, prepare all your herbs and mix them in a large bowl. Make sure not to bruise the herbs.
3. Drain and cool the potatoes and then chop them into bite-sized pieces. Add half the herbs and toss to coat
4. This next step might have to be done in two batches. In a cast-iron skillet or similar, add the ghee, garlic, chilli flakes, and coriander seeds. Cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes.
5. Add the turmeric powder and the juice and zest of the limes. Add the potatoes and leave it to develop a crust. Stir as little as possible. It's done when the potatoes are coated in all the aromatics and it has crispy bits around it.
6. In the bowl of herbs, add the olive oil and the remaining 2 tsp lime juice and gently toss to coat.

To serve:

transfer the potatoes into a several small/medium dishes garnish with the herb oil

Za'atar eggs

7 Eggs
1.5 tbsp lemon juice
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp za'atar
1 pinch chilli powder

1 tsp sesame seeds
salt and black pepper

Steps:

1. Boil the eggs for 6.5 minutes then plunge into ice cold water to stop the cooking.
2. Break the eggs in half using your hands so you get nice scraggly and uneven pieces. Break them horizontally and vertically to create variety. Place on your serving plate.
3. In a small bowl, whisk the lemon juice, olive oil, za'atar, sesame seeds, and a pinch of salt. Drizzle it all over the eggs.
4. Finish with a sprinkling of chilli powder, garnishing salt, and black pepper

Ta'ameia

300g fava beans, peeled (soaked overnight)
1.5 cups of fresh coriander and parsley
¼ white onion, roughly chopped
4 garlic cloves, medium
1 tsp coriander
1 tsp salt
oil for deep frying
5tbsp coriander seeds, for garnish
2 ½ tbsp sesame seeds, for garnish

Steps:

1. Soak the fava beans overnight then drain very well. You want as little of the water to go into the final mixture.
2. In a food processor, add the fresh herbs, onion, garlic, coriander seeds, and salt. Blitz until almost a smooth paste (think of a wet sandy mixture).
3. Add the fava beans and pulse until kind of a sandy texture, but larger grains. Add the "garnishing" sesame and coriander seeds and pulse until mixed through. Place bean mix in the fridge until ready to use.
4. Pre-heat your oil to 175C.
5. Form the taameia into even balls by using the special taameia tool or slightly damp hands. Place them in a tray with baking paper or cook immediately.
6. Cook the taameia in batches for about 2-4 minutes or until golden brown all around. Place onto paper towel to absorb excess oil.

Rose and Pistachio Om Ali

For the custard:

270g sugar
4 eggs
2 yolks
1 tsp baking powder
400g milk
400g cream (35%)
1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp rosewater

Steps:

1. Whisk the sugar, eggs, yolks and baking powder in a bowl until the colour changes to a pale yellow and the mixture is airy.
2. Whisk in the remaining ingredients. Set aside.

For the dough:

450g phyllo
150g butter, melted
1tbsp brown sugar
tbsp icing sugar + 1tbsp cinnamon, mixed together
handful of pistachios, chopped

Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 200C. Coat the baking dish with some butter. This next part will be demonstrated.
2. Brush 1 phyllo sheet with butter and place it at the bottom of your dish. Repeat this step 4-5 times until the bottom & sides of the dish are covered.
3. With the remaining sheets, one at a time, drizzle it with butter, fold it loosely like a fan, and place it on the dish. Repeat until you've used up all the sheets.
4. Bake for approximately 20 minutes or until evenly golden. When done, turn the temperature down to 180C and take the phyllo out.
5. Ladle the custard filling all over the phyllo and top it with brown sugar. Let it sit for 5 minutes before baking it again for another 20-25 minutes or until the custard is set. Let it cool for about 10 minutes.
6. Dust with cinnamon + icing sugar and top with nuts and/or rose petals