



Al Waha Restaurant

HUMMUS

Pureed chickpeas with sesame paste and lemon juice

Hummus has its history as a “food of the poor,” because it’s very filling and fairly nutritious, and yet this chickpea dish has now become a staple eaten throughout the Middle East, showing up on every table at every meal at every level of society. Hummus even shows up regularly on Western appetizer lists and buffet tables.

When I was growing up in Damascus, my father used to go to the shop to have our hummus made to taste. You could even provide your own tahini (sesame paste) and lemon juice. While making it, the shopkeeper would let you taste it so that it could be prepared exactly how you wanted it...a little more lemon, or a bit more salt. This personalized approach to hummus may be a thing of the past in Damascus, however, it is still usual to pop out to buy your hummus freshly made in a neighborhood shop...and it’s delicious!

Hummus must have a smooth, velvety texture: this is absolutely essential! In order to achieve this, you need to skin the chickpeas -- not as hard as it may sound!! (Once a customer asked me how did we do this in Al-Waha. I answered that we had about 20 little children in the kitchen doing just that. The lady looked at me very perplexed and after some hesitation asked whether that was legal! Now I shall tell you how it’s really done...)

Ingredients (Serves 4 to 6 people)

20 ounces (1 ¼ pound) of dried chick peas (also known as garbanzo beans) (Note: Do not use canned chickpeas, they are too soft!)

1 tablespoon of baking soda

6 ounces of tahini (sesame paste)

6 ounces of lemon juice (very cold: add icy water to achieve this)

Salt

For garnish:

Paprika

Sweet red peppers

Parsley

Olive oil

Soaking the Chickpeas

It is a good idea to sort through your chickpeas before you boil them to remove any disfigured or bad chickpeas.

Soak the dried chickpeas overnight with a lot of water (cover them completely, use twice the amount of water vs. the volume of chickpeas).

The next day, rinse the chickpeas well with cold water.

Cooking the Chickpeas

Fill a pot with plenty of water, using the same amount as when you soaked them.

Add the baking soda, then bring to the boil.



AL-WAHA RESTAURANT

In Notting Hill, at 75 Westbourne Grove, London W2 4UL UK

We are opened every day, from 12.00 noon till late.

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When the water is boiling turn the heat down and allow to simmer until the chickpeas are cooked, 60 to 90 minutes. You can cover them with a lid, but this is not necessary, just make sure that the water keeps boiling.

(To check if your chickpeas are cooked, throw one onto the wall. If it sticks, they are cooked!)

Skimming the Chickpeas

Take the pot off the heat and put it under the cold water tap. The cold water will shock the skins into cracking so that they will easily come off and float to the surface. In order to allow them to float up you need to gently stir the chickpeas and as the skins surface remove them with a slotted spoon. Keep stirring a little and removing the skins that surface until you've removed most skins.

Now strain the chickpeas and leave them in a colander, in the fridge, preferably overnight. This will allow all the excess water to drain.

Preparing the Hummus

You can pound the chickpeas by hand in a bowl using a pestle; however, a food processor makes things much easier.

So, place the chickpeas in a food processor until you have a smooth paste, add the tahini (sesame paste) until the mixture become very smooth, but still a little firm.

At this point add the very cold lemon juice (mix icy water and lemon juice to have an extremely cold juice). By adding very cold lemon juice you will prevent the mixture in the food processor from heating up so much as to affect its taste.

Finally add salt to taste.

Now leave the mixture as it is in the processor for 15-20 minutes, this allows it to rest and develop its full consistency. If, when you return to it, you find that it is too thick, just add a little more lemon juice.

Serving the Hummus

Put the hummus in a dish and sprinkle some paprika, decorate with shapes made out of sweet red pepper, then sprinkle some chopped parsley and finally a dash of olive oil.

If you have some hummus left over, cover it with plastic wrap and refrigerate it. It will still be delicious the next day.

~ M. Alden



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