



Al Waha Restaurant

# MOUTABEL

## *Grilled eggplant with sesame paste and lemon juice*

Moutabel is a dip like hummus, but it is a completely different experience. Like hummus, moutabel is regularly found on nearly every Middle Eastern table. In this recipe the eggplants are grilled, however they can also be fried.

You may be familiar with a form of this dish known by another name, babaganoush. During the month of Ramadan, moutabel is eaten every day. In the past the eggplants would be pounded and mixed with all other ingredients by hand in a large copper bowl. I can remember my mother assigning me the task of garlic crusher.

## Moutabel

Ingredients (serves 4-6 people)

2 eggplants  
1/3 cup tahini (sesame paste)  
3 ounces plain yogurt  
1-2 teaspoons of salt or to taste  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 1/2 tablespoons pomegranate paste (optional)

### **For garnish:**

Paprika  
Sweet red peppers  
Parsley  
Pomegranate seeds  
Walnuts

## **Preparing Moutabel**

Grill the eggplants.

Stick the eggplants on a couple of skewers and grill over an open flame (I place them on the naked flame of my gas stove). This is the best way to obtain that great smoky flavor (you can put them under the grill if you like). The skin will blacken and wither with the heat, keep turning them until the eggplants' skin is soft all over to the touch and a skewer can easily cut through the vegetables.

As soon as this happens, take them off the flame and put them in a pot filled with cold water (this will help to cool the eggplants and make it easier to peel them).

Peel the eggplants (I found it helps also to peel them under cold running water).

Discard the burnt skin and put the pulp in a strainer to preferably leave overnight in the fridge. This will ensure that the excess water is removed.

(Instead of grilling, you can deep or shallow fry your eggplants until golden. Then continue on with preparation. Using this method however, you do not get that smoky taste which is so typical of this dish.)



### **AL WAHA RESTAURANT**

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



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Cut the eggplants into small pieces and then pound to a rough pulp (you don't want it too smooth, it's good to have some texture left).

As you add the other ingredients make sure you incorporate them one by one into the mixture.

First, add the tahini, then the yogurt if you wish (yogurt will help take some of the bitterness of the vegetables away, but if you like that bitter taste don't add any yogurt).

Now add the lemon juice and the salt (to taste).

If you prefer a sweeter taste I found that adding pomegranate paste works very well.

### **Serving Moutabel**

Place the mixture in a dish and smooth it out to cover the dish. Garnish with paprika, parsley leaves, wedges of sweet red pepper, pomegranate seeds and walnuts (walnuts go extremely well with this dish). Finish off with a dash of olive oil. Like hummus, moutabel will keep for a couple of days in the fridge. Don't forget to cover with plastic wrap.



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