



Muhammara (roasted red pepper dip)

Serving:

6

Type:

appetizer, dairy free and vegan

Author:

Leah Koenig, Little book of Jewish Appetizers

Notes:

"Muhammara is one of the crowning jewels of the Middle Eastern mezze spread. Originally from Aleppo, Syria, and popular throughout the region, it purées roasted red bell peppers with walnuts, pomegranate molasses, bread crumbs, and cumin into a textured spread with a flavor as vibrant as the dish's sunset color. Middle Eastern Jews serve muhammara as an appetizer with pita for swiping, or as part of the main meal, alongside fried eggplant slices or grilled meat.

Pomegranate molasses, which plays a starring role in muhammara, is made from pomegranate juice that gets boiled down into a tangy condensed syrup. It is possible to buy pomegranate molasses at Middle Eastern grocery stores and online (page 126). But if you need to go the DIY route, simply simmer about 1/2 cup [120 ml] of bottled 100-percent

pomegranate juice in a saucepan set over medium heat, stirring often, until it reduces and coats the back of a spoon, 10 to 15 minutes. Any leftover molasses not needed for the dip tastes wonderful drizzled over baked fish, grain dishes, and cheese."

Ingredients:

1/2 CUP [55 G] WALNUT HALVES

7 OZ [200 G] JAR ROASTED RED BELL PEPPERS, DRAINED WELL AND COARSELY CHOPPED

2 SCALLIONS, WHITE AND GREEN PARTS, COARSELY CHOPPED

1/3 CUP [40 G] UNSEASONED DRIED BREAD CRUMBS

1 SMALL GARLIC CLOVE, PEELED

1 TSP DRIED MINT, PLUS MORE FOR GARNISH

1/2 TSP RED PEPPER FLAKES, OR MORE TO TASTE

1 TSP GROUND CUMIN

2 TSP FRESH LEMON JUICE, OR MORE TO TASTE

1 TBSP POMEGRANATE MOLASSES

1/2 TSP KOSHER SALT, OR MORE TO TASTE

1/3 CUP [75 ML] EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, PLUS MORE FOR DRIZZLING FRESH POMEGRANATE SEEDS FOR GARNISH

Directions:

1. Place the walnuts in a small skillet and set over medium heat. Cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until fragrant and lightly browned, 5 to 7

minutes. Remove from the heat and transfer to a cutting board to cool. When cool enough to handle, coarsely chop.

2. Combine the walnuts, roasted peppers, scallions, bread crumbs, garlic, mint, red pepper flakes, cumin, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, and salt in a food processor and pulse until a chunky paste forms, scraping down the sides of the processor bowl as necessary. With the machine running, drizzle in the olive oil and process until combined. Taste and add more salt, red pepper flakes, and lemon juice, if desired. Be careful not to go overboard as the flavors will continue to develop while the dish rests.

3. Transfer the muhammara to a wide serving bowl or plate and make a shallow well in the center with the back of a spoon. Sprinkle the pomegranate seeds and a little dried mint in the well, then drizzle a little more olive oil over the top. Serve immediately. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.