

loaded hummus

I am a huge fan of Yotam Ottolenghi, the famous British-Israeli restaurateur and food writer. His recipe for hummus in his award-winning cookbook *Jerusalem* changed the way I eat and serve hummus: he processes his hummus until it is super-smooth and creamy, then tops it with chopped olives, parsley, roasted pine nuts and olive oil. It is simply dreamy – this simple yet opulent dip, spread out wide on a shallow dish.

Making hummus from raw chickpeas is, in my opinion, far superior to using canned chickpeas. Once you've seen and tasted the results, you'll agree that it is truly worth the extra time it takes to make.

Served with fresh, crusty bread, it's all you need for a simple meal but it also makes a fabulous informal starter.

Note: This recipe requires a few hours of soaking, so start the previous day if you want to make it for lunch.

Serves a crowd

250 g uncooked organic chickpeas
10 ml (2 teaspoons) bicarbonate of soda
125 ml (½ cup) freshly squeezed lemon juice
30 ml (2 tablespoons) extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
1 clove garlic, finely grated
80 ml (⅓ cup) tahini (sesame paste)
1 ml (¼ teaspoon) ground cumin
salt
60–125 ml (¼–½ cup) cold water
125 ml (½ cup) kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
a generous handful fresh Italian parsley, finely chopped
30 ml (2 tablespoons) pine nuts, roasted in a dry pan

Place the chickpeas and 5 ml (1 teaspoon) bicarbonate of soda in a ceramic bowl and cover with water to a level of about 5 cm above the chickpeas. Soak for at least 3 hours, but preferably overnight. Drain and rinse the chickpeas, then transfer to a medium-size pot. Add the remaining 5 ml (1 teaspoon) bicarbonate of soda and cover with fresh water, to the same level as before. Bring to a boil, then simmer until tender and almost falling apart, skimming off any foam from the surface.

Transfer the cooked chickpeas to a food processor (or better yet, a power blender) along with the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, tahini, cumin and some salt. Process to a fine, creamy purée, adding enough cold water to loosen it up and get a really smooth result – the magic is all in the texture. Taste and adjust the seasoning, if necessary. Store in the fridge until ready to serve – it needs some time to rest and for the flavours to develop, so it's best to make ahead.

Serve at room temperature (give it a good stir before plating) on a shallow wide plate, topped with chopped olives, parsley and roasted pine nuts with a generous drizzle of olive oil and some crusty bread on the side.

The hummus will keep well in the fridge for at least four days.

