

Salads

Moroccan tomato & onion salad

This recipe makes about 4-8 servings.

6-8 very ripe tomatoes, sliced crosswise
1 sweet red onion, sliced into rings
½ dl. olive oil
1 Tbl. red wine vinegar (preferably sherry-wine vinegar)
½ clove garlic, peeled and crushed (or grated)
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
chopped parsley
pinch of cumin
pinch of paprika

Combine the tomatoes and onions. Make a sauce with the remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly with the tomatoes and onions. Serve at room temperature.

spicy carrot & fennel salad

Makes about 4-8 servings

500 gr. young carrots, peeled
2 cloves garlic, crushed into a paste (or grated)
½ tsp. sweet paprika
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
½ Tbl. sugar or honey
2 tsp. olive oil
2 Tbl. fresh lemon juice
1 Tbl. white wine vinegar
2 small fennel bulbs, sliced thin
1 Tbl. freshly ground cumin seeds
2 Tbl. fresh coriander, chopped

Add the carrots, garlic paste, paprika, cayenne pepper, sugar or honey, olive oil and about 1 dl. of water. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce the heat, cover the pot and cook the carrots for about 10 minutes. Remove the cover and reduce the liquid until nearly dry. Add the white wine vinegar, lemon juice, cumin, coriander and fennel slices. Toss and cool. Serve at room temperature.

beets with orange blossom water and moroccan spices

Orange flower water is used a lot in Moroccan cooking. Orange trees are abundant in the country and the water is made by distilling the blossoms. You can also make this recipe by roasting the beets instead of boiling them. Roast with skins on, then peel and slice or cube before mixing with the remainder of the ingredients. Serves 4-6

500 gr. fresh beetroot
1 liter water
½ tsp. sweet paprika
1 Tbl. sugar
1 tsp. orange blossom water
½ tsp. freshly ground cumin seeds
pinch of ground cinnamon
juice of one lemon
3 spring onions, sliced
salt to taste

Place the beets and water in a large saucepan, bring to a boil, cover and continue to boil until tender – about one hour. Drain, reserving 1,5 dl. of the cooking water, and peel when they are cool enough to handle. Let the reserved cooking water cool.

In a small bowl, combine the reserved cooking liquid, paprika, sugar, orange blossom water, cumin, cinnamon, lemon juice, spring onions and salt. Slice the beets thinly and arrange in a serving bowl. Pour the dressing evenly over the beets and refrigerate for one hour before serving.

cauliflower with pine nut tarator sauce

This mezze is sometimes served whole on a grand platter, surrounded by black olives and coated with a rich Tarator sauce, made from fresh bread, pine nuts and vinegar. In Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, Tarator sauce is made with tahini, parsley, lemon juice, garlic and pine nuts. Makes 4-6 servings

1,5 liter water
juice from ½ lemon
salt to taste
1 large head cauliflower
60 gr. pine nuts
1 large garlic clove, chopped
1 dl. olive oil
4 slices bread, crusts removed (soak in water, then squeeze dry)
sea salt
½ dl. white wine vinegar
olives to garnish

Cook the cauliflower first by bringing a large pot of water to a boil. Add the lemon juice and salt liberally. Cook the cauliflower, partially covered, until tender – about 20 minutes. Drain and cool.

Prepare the sauce by placing ½ of the pine nuts in a blender with the garlic, ½ of the olive oil and half of the bread. Pulse a few times. Add the remaining olive oil, pine nuts and bread and blend until smooth, scraping down the sides as necessary. Add the salt and vinegar and process in bursts. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate for 1 hour.

To serve, spread the sauce on top of the cauliflower and garnish with the olives.

chickpea sauté with soy yogurt

Excellent served either warm or at room temperature. Use mangold, spinach or even rocket as a substitute for chard. Garnish with ground sumac. Serves 4-6

400 gr. Swiss chard
1,5 dl. olive oil
4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
1 tsp. caraway seeds
400 gr. cooked chickpeas
1 garlic clove, crushed or grated
1 Tbl. chopped mint
1 Tbl. chopped coriander
1 Tbl. lemon juice
salt and black pepper
100 gr. soy yogurt
1 Tbl. olive oil

Separate the chard stalks from the leaves. Blanch the stalks in plenty of boiling salted water for 3 minutes. Add the leaves and continue cooking for 2 minutes, then drain everything. Refresh under cold running water and squeeze dry, then chop roughly. Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy saucepan. Add the carrots and caraway seeds and sauté for 5 minutes on medium heat. Add the chard and chickpeas and continue cooking for 6 minutes. Add the garlic, herbs, lemon juice and some salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and cool down a little. Taste and adjust the seasoning. To serve, mix together the yogurt, olive oil and some salt and pepper. Pile the vegetables on serving dishes and spoon the yogurt on top. Sprinkle with freshly ground pepper and drizzle over more olive oil or flax seed oil.

Main

slow-roasted salmon with chermoula

This recipe is very typical of the Moroccan Jewish community. Fish was often cooked on Friday before the beginning of the Sabbath and marinated in a vinegar-based salsa overnight. The fish is tender and delicious the next day with no heating required...which of course, is perfect for the Sabbath tradition. Slow-roasting salmon is one way to produce a succulent and tender fish. It is delicious served at room temperature with a Moroccan-style chermoula sauce – a kind of salsa. Yield: about 4 servings

For the Salmon:

olive oil
fresh herbs (use thyme, wild fennel or tarragon)
500 gr. salmon filet, with skin-on
sea salt and freshly ground pepper

For the Chermoula:

3 bunches fresh coriander
1 large bunch parsley
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 onion, chopped fine
1 chili pepper, seeded and finely chopped (optional)
2 tblsp sherry vinegar
juice of one lemon
2-3 tomatoes, pureed
1,5 dl. olive oil
salt, cumin, paprika

Oil a baking dish and cover the bottom with a layer of fresh herbs.

Place the seasoned salmon, skin side down, on the herbs. Lightly oil the top of the salmon and season. Bake at 120° C for about 25 minutes. The salmon should be just set. The salmon is completely cooked just prior to the proteins coagulating, which is obvious from the white stuff coming out of the flesh – a little on the sides is ok, but too much on top means the fish has been overcooked.

Make the Chermoula: Mix together the coriander, parsley, chopped garlic and chopped onion. Crush well using a mortar and pestle until a thick paste forms (add 1 Tbl. of olive oil if the mixture is too dry). Alternatively, use a blender instead of a mortar and pestle. Mix the paste with the chopped chili pepper if using, sherry vinegar, lemon juice, seasonings, pureed tomatoes and the remaining olive oil.

Once the salmon is cooked, remove it to a clean platter and completely coat the fish with the chermoula. Allow the mixture to sit for about an hour or two, then enjoy the fish at room temperature. Don't refrigerate the fish after it has cooked. It will be perfectly safe at room temperature for a couple of hours at minimum.

Sweets

brutti ma buoni

A classic Piemontese cookie, which I had the pleasure to learn while living in Alba and being instructed by one of Italy's best pastry chefs at the time.

Yield: makes about 20-24

100 gr. egg whites
200 gr. sugar
pinch of salt
250 gr. chopped hazelnuts
zest of 1 orange (optional)

Make a soft meringue with the egg whites and sugar and add a pinch of salt. Fold together the hazelnuts and meringue, adding the orange zest if using. Transfer the mixture to a large sauce pan, and cook gently over medium-high heat. The mixture will stick to the pan, so it is important to constantly stir the mixture until it is stiff and slightly brown. Pour the batter onto a clean work surface and cool by turning it onto itself. Spoon dollops onto a baking pan lined with parchment paper. No need to make them look nice – remember, the English translation for this cookie is ugly but good! Bake in a pre-heated 150°C for about 15 minutes, then turn up the heat to 160°C and continue to bake an additional 4-5 minutes. The cookies should be golden on the bottom. Transfer to a rack and cool before digging into them. Store in an airtight container for 3-5 days (you can also freeze these cookies by completely baking them, cooling completely and placing them on a baking tray in the freezer – once frozen, transfer to a zip-lock bag...place directly in a pre-heated 170°C oven for 3-4 minutes before eating).

olive oil and lemon shortbread

makes about 12-18

100 gr. powdered sugar
75 gr. olive oil
175 gr. all-purpose flour
50 gr. cornstarch
3 gr. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
zest of one lemon
4-5 Tbl. rice milk

In a food processor, mix together the powdered sugar and olive oil until slightly creamy (about 2 minutes). Combine the flour, corn starch, baking powder and salt in a separate bowl. Add the lemon zest, then add the flour to the olive oil mixture slowly while processing – add the rice milk so the mixture clumps into a ball. Roll out into a large circle about 1-cm thick. Cut out small rounds and make a decorative mark with a fork around the cookie. Bake in a 160°C oven for 22-26 minutes (the cookies are done when barely browned and light golden on the bottom). Cool slightly then transfer to wire rack and cool completely.

cashew cream

Add 1 dl. of honey, date paste or apricot paste with 2 tsp. vanilla extract to obtain a nice sweetness. The cream will keep a few days in the refrigerator or freeze it if you would like to keep it longer.
yield: about 8 dl.

340 gr. cashews
1 – 1,5 liters water
2,5 dl. water or non-dairy milk
pinch of sea salt

Soak the cashews in water for 3-4 hours (or overnight) to soften completely. Strain well and place in a high speed blender with the remaining ingredients (add the sweetener and vanilla if making a sweet cream). Blend on low speed and increase to high. Blend until very smooth.

blueberry-nectarine crisp

You can also use the topping for this crisp in combination with any seasonal fruit. Try using apples and raisins in the winter or strawberries and rhubarb in the spring.

for the filling

250 gr. blueberries
500 gr. nectarines
75 gr. apple juice
15 gr. maple syrup
7 gr. arrowroot powder
20 gr. rice flour
pinch ground vanilla (or 1 tsp. vanilla extract)
1 tsp. ground ginger
pinch sea salt

for the topping

100 gr. rolled oats
120 gr. pastry flour
120 gr. chopped walnuts (can also use almonds)
50 gr. almond butter
60 gr. olive oil
75 gr. maple syrup
1 tsp. ground vanilla (or 1 tsp. vanilla extract)
½ tsp. fine sea salt

Preheat the oven to 190° C. Make the filling by washing the berries and slicing the nectarines (about 1-cm thick), then tossing together in a large bowl the prepared fruit, apple juice, maple syrup, arrowroot powder, rice flour, vanilla, ginger and salt. In a separate bowl, prepare the topping by combining the oats, flour, nuts, almond butter, oil, syrup, vanilla and salt. Pour the fruit mixture into a 2-liter baking dish and cover with the topping. Cover the dish with aluminum foil (shiny side down) and place in the preheated oven. Bake for 30 minutes, then remove the foil and bake an additional 15 minutes, or until the topping is crisp and golden and the fruit is bubbling.