



MUHAMARRA (ROASTED RED PEPPER AND WALNUT SPREAD)

Muhamarra is enjoyed in many Middle Eastern countries. This recipe is adapted from friend and Turkish food and travel expert, Kathleen O'Neill. It gets its distinctive taste from pomegranate syrup, also called pomegranate molasses or paste, a thick, syrupy pomegranate juice reduction with a rich, tart flavor and slightly sweet notes. Pomegranate syrup is excellent used as a glaze for roasted or grilled meats and chicken. From Marie Simmons collection.

1 ½ cups broken walnuts
1 slice whole wheat bread (about ½ cup crumbled)
1 jar (12 ounces) roasted red peppers, rinsed and drained, coarsely chopped (about 1 ½ cups)
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more to taste
2 tablespoons pomegranate syrup (also called pomegranate paste or molasses) plus more to taste
1 tablespoon fresh lemon or lime juice
1 tablespoon hot red pepper paste or ¼ teaspoon ground red chiles, or to taste (look for Zergut brand vegetable paste)*
1 teaspoon coarser salt, or to taste
¾ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon sugar (optional)
Toasted pita or lavash

1. Combine the walnuts and bread in the bowl of a food processor; process until finely chopped.
2. Add the roasted peppers and olive oil; process until smooth. Add the pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, hot red pepper paste, salt, cumin and sugar. Process until blended.
3. Add additional olive oil, 1 tablespoon at a time, pulsing after each addition, until mixture is thick, but easy to spread. Taste and add more of the syrup, salt, and/or sugar, and lemon juice, if needed.

4. Refrigerate, covered, until ready to serve. Flavors will mellow as it stands. Serve with oven toasted or grilled pita or other flat bread.

Makes about 2 cups or 8 or more servings

OVEN TOASTED OR GRILLED FLAT BREAD

You will need about 1 pita per serving. Separate each pita along the folds making two circles. Lightly brush each with a thin film of olive oil (optional). Stack the pita circles and cut into quarters. Spread on baking sheets, in a single layer; bake in a preheated 350° F oven turning once, until golden, about 15 minutes. Alternately leave the oiled pita in circles and toast on a hot grill, turning once, until golden, about 1 minute per side depending on the heat of the grill. Break into pieces to serve.