

MYERBERG CENTER – COOKING WITH CHEF ALBA

“ROCKIN' MOROCCAN SUMMER DISHES”

Easycookingwithalba.blogspot.com, aejhome@yahoo.com



ZA'ATAR TOPPED FOCACCIA

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tbsp salt
1 envelope Yeast instant acting
1 ½ tbsp extra virgin olive Oil
1 ½ cups lukewarm water

Topping:

3 tbsp zaatar spice
3 tbsp olive oil

The Dough: (or use ready-made dough)

1. Mix flour and yeast in a large bowl. Add the salt and mix again.
2. Make a well in the mixture.
3. Add the olive oil and warm water a little at a time and mix with a wooden spoon.
4. Once the dough is formed, knead for ten minutes. Cover and set aside for 60-90 minutes or until dough has doubled in size.
5. Pour dough out on a floured surface and cut into three pieces.
6. Roll out each piece dough you will be using, place on parchment paper on a tray. The other pieces of dough can be refrigerated or frozen.
7. When ready to bake preheat oven to 400F.

The Topping

1. Put za'atar in a small bowl. Stir in the olive oil until you have a spreadable consistency.
2. Spread the za'atar mixture on the dough with edges exposed.
3. Bake for 15 minutes or until focaccia reaches golden bottom.

To make your own za'atar: Grind in a mortar and pestle

1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds, 1/4 cup ground sumac, 2 tablespoons dried thyme
2 tablespoons dried marjoram, 2 tablespoons dried oregano, 1 teaspoon coarse salt

CARROT AND HERB SALAD

1 pound carrots, peeled, cut into 1/4-inch-thick rounds
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1-2 tsp ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
Red pepper flakes
1/4 cup warm water
3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley, roughly chopped

1. Cook carrots in medium saucepan of boiling salted water until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Drain well.
2. Add the oil and garlic in a skillet on low heat. Cook until the garlic is barely golden. Add cumin and cayenne until aromatic, about 30 seconds. Add carrots, then 1/4 cup warm water and vinegar. Simmer over medium heat until liquid is absorbed, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat. Cool and add herb.

CHICKPEAS WITH DATE AND SPICES

3 cups cooked chickpeas
1/4 cup extra olive oil
1 small onion, finely diced
2 ½ tbsp tomato paste
12 medjool dates, pitted and chopped (or another soft sweet variety, like Deglet Noor)
1/4 tsp ground cardamom
3 tsp ground cumin
Salt and black pepper
1/2 tsp ground ginger
2 whole star anise, optional

1. Drain chickpeas and set aside. Combine all spices (cardamom through star anise) in a small bowl.
2. In a medium pot set over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it begins to shimmer. Add the onions and sauté for a few minutes, until they have softened and golden. Reduce heat to medium and stir in the tomato paste. Add the spice mixture and allow to toast for a minute or two.
3. Add the chickpeas, dates, and ½ cup or more of water, enough to make them less than dry. Simmer the mixture for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally to incorporate the flavors, until the dates have fallen apart, and the chickpeas are very tender, you may have to add a splash of water if the pan gets dry. Serve warm.

EXOTIC APRICOT PISTACHIO BITES

30 shelled pistachios (to mix with apricots)

¾ pound of unsweetened dried apricots, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon of orange juice

20-25 shelled pistachios, for filling

½ cup of granulated sugar for coating, optional

1. Put the 30 shelled pistachios in a food processor, pulse to break them up until finely chopped but not powdered. It should have a texture much thicker than grated cheese.
2. Add the dried apricots and orange juice and process until it forms a smooth paste. Test by forming a small ball. If it hold up well you have the right consistency. If it appears to be dry, add a few more drops of orange juice.
3. Slightly wet your hands and place a small amount of the apricot pistachio mixture in the center of your palm. Shape into small walnut size balls.
4. Place the granulated sugar in a bowl and roll each apricot bite. Coat each entire ball. Slightly indent the center of each ball with you fingertip and place a pistachio into it by pressing down. Repeat this process until you have used up all of the ingredients. Makes 20-24 pieces. Arrange on a serving plate.