

Middle Eastern Chickpea Salad



Mint, which puts out spring leaves before most perennial herbs, is used to perfection in this salad that is a favourite of Suzanne Friemann, Director of the Pelee Island Bird Observatory. The recipe calls for mint sauce and garlic sauce, available at Lebanese groceries, but both are easily made at home.

INGREDIENTS

2 garlic cloves

SPLASH of olive oil

3 CUPS (3.5 oz/100g) fresh durable greens ie. spinach, endive, or chard

2 tomatoes, chunked

1 CAN (14 oz) chickpeas, drained

1 TSP mint sauce

Salt and pepper

CHOPPED mint leaves

DOLLOP of garlic sauce

Sauté the garlic in a little oil and tip in the greens, stirring well. After a couple of minutes, add the tomatoes, chickpeas, and mint sauce, and allow to cook a few minutes more, then season to taste. Tip into a bowl, toss with mint leaves, add a dollop of garlic sauce, and enjoy with flatbread.

SERVES 2

MINT SAUCE

Mint sauce—a quick mix of vinegar, sugar, and mint, with enough boiling water to bring out the flavour—only takes moments to make and far outshines store-bought. Using these proportions, make as much as you want and adjust the sweet/tart balance to your taste.

A BUNCH of fresh garden mint

Pinch salt

4 TBSP boiling water (or less)

4 TBSP white wine vinegar

1 LEVEL TBSP white or brown sugar

Strip the mint leaves off the stalks, sprinkle with salt and chop finely. Place into a jug, add the sugar and pour in the boiling water. Stir and leave to cool.

Stir in the vinegar. Taste and add more water or vinegar to your liking. Let sit for an hour before using.

MAKES 1 CUP

GARLIC SAUCE

This sauce is cousin to Greek skordalia and Spanish aioli. More paste than sauce, the method is similar to mayonnaise and has the same creamy texture.

3 BULBS garlic, peeled

4-5 CUPS of light vegetable oil (canola or sunflower, not olive oil)

1 lemon, freshly juiced

1 TSP salt (or to taste)

Have all ingredients at room temperature. Add the garlic and salt to a food processor or blender and run for 10-20 seconds. Stop, scrape garlic down the sides, then run processor again for another 10-20 seconds. Repeat 3-4 times until the garlic is completely crushed and starting to turn to paste.

With the processor running, very slowly add oil in a very thin stream, ½ cup at a time. Then add ½ teaspoon of lemon juice very slowly, in a thin stream. Alternate oil and lemon juice until all are used and the sauce is emulsified, 8-10 minutes.

