

# **Dmitra's Lebanese Hommus, Tabbouleh, and Pita**

**Each Recipe Serves 6-8 for Appetizers**

*Dmitra Khoury, originally from Lebanon, makes fresh tabbouleh every summer with the fresh mint, parsley and tomatoes from her garden. Her pita bread, which is not difficult to make, is so much better than the store-bought rounds, and goes wonderfully with her homemade hommus.*

## **TABBOULEH**

½ cup fine bulgur

4 medium tomatoes, finely chopped

2 cups parsley leaves (flat-leaf or curly), finely chopped approximately 2 bunches)

1/3 cup mint leaves, finely chopped

1/3 cup scallions, finely chopped

1/3 cup fresh lemon juice

½ cup olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper

8 to 10 romaine lettuce leaves, washed and dried

In a small bowl, soak the bulgur in enough water to cover it completely. Allow it to soak for about 10 minutes. Drain well.

In a mixing bowl, combine the bulgur, tomatoes, parsley, mint, scallions, lemon juice, and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

To serve, arrange the lettuce leaves around the edges of a serving bowl or platter, with the stem end toward the center. Mound the tabbouleh in the center so that the top halves of the leaves are still visible. To eat, spoon a small amount of tabbouleh onto one of the lettuce leaves.

## HOMMUS

1 1/2 cups cooked chick peas, drained and cooking liquid reserved (a 15-ounce can, drained and rinsed, can be substituted)

1 clove garlic, minced

1/3 cup tahini paste

1/4 cup lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon salt

In a blender or food processor, puree the chick peas, garlic, tahini, lemon juice, salt, and approximately 1/2 cup of the reserved cooking liquid from the chick peas. (If you used can chick peas, substitute water.) More liquid may be added if mixture is too thick. Blend until smooth.

Can be made 1-2 days ahead. Serve with pita bread. (Recipe follows.)

## PITA BREAD

*Makes 6 rounds*

1 package active dry yeast (2 1/4 teaspoons)

1 tablespoon honey

1/2 cup plus 1 cup warm water, divided

3 cups all-purpose flour

1 ½ teaspoons salt

1 tablespoon olive oil

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve the yeast and honey in ½ cup of the warm water and allow to proof. (The yeast should begin to froth, indicating it is converting sugar into carbon dioxide bubbles.) Add the remaining 1 cup of water, flour, and salt. Mix until combined. (The dough will be sticky.)

Turn onto a floured surface and knead until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. (An electric mixer with a dough hook attachment can be used instead. The kneading time will be less.)

Shape the dough into a ball and place it in a large bowl that has been brushed with the olive oil. Turn the dough in the bowl to coat its entire surface with oil. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free spot until it has doubled in size, about 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Punch down the dough and turn it onto a floured surface. Divide it into 6 equal pieces and shape each into a ball. Roll each ball into an 8-inch circle, approximately ¼ inch thick. Lay the circles on baking sheets that have been lightly dusted with cornmeal. Let rest in a warm spot for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 500° F. Bake pita until it begins to puff up, approximately 3 to 4 minutes. (Do not allow pitas to brown.) Turn them over and bake for an additional 3 to 4 minutes. Stack them on a plate and cover with a clean, dry cloth. Allow the loaves to deflate slightly before serving.

Lynne Christy Anderson is the author of *Breaking Bread: Recipes and Stories from Immigrant Kitchens*, published by University of California Press. Visit her website at [www.lynnchristyanderson.com](http://www.lynnchristyanderson.com).

## **Yasie's Persian *Kashk-o-Bedemjan* and *Kou Kou Sabzi***

### **Grilled Eggplant with Yogurt Sauce and Green Herb Omelet**

**Serves 3-4 for Dinner or 6-8 as Appetizers**

*These are wonderful summer dishes when eggplant and herbs are in season. Yasie, originally from Tehran, loves to offer people her Persian dishes as a way for them to experience a part of her culture. She sees food as a “great icebreaker” with the power to bring people together.*

#### **KASHK-O-BEDEMJAN (Grilled Eggplant with Yogurt Sauce)**

5 Chinese eggplants (about 2 pounds)\*

Salt

¼ cup plus ¼ cup vegetable oil, divided

1 tablespoon *kashk*\*\*

¼ cup onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoons dried mint

1 teaspoon saffron liquid (recipe follows)

Cut the tips off the eggplants, peel, and slice them in half lengthwise. If using the larger globe eggplant, you may need to cut it in quarters lengthwise so that the pieces are

no larger than an inch wide. “Sweat” the eggplant (to reduce some of its bitter taste): Place the eggplant pieces in a colander and generously sprinkle salt over them. Allow them to sweat some of their liquid for about 20 to 25 minutes. Rinse well and pat dry with paper towels.

In a large skillet, heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add the eggplant and cook, covered, turning occasionally, until lightly browned on all sides, about 10 minutes. (You may need to do this in two batches if your skillet isn’t big enough to fit all of the eggplant. Add more oil between batches if necessary.)

In a large bowl, lightly mash the hot eggplant. Cool. Add the *kashk* and mix. Transfer to a serving dish.

Meanwhile, in a small skillet, heat the  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove the onions from the oil and sprinkle them over the eggplant. Add the mint to the hot oil and continue to cook for 5 to 10 seconds only. Remove the mint from the oil and sprinkle it over the eggplant.

Drizzle the saffron liquid over the eggplant and serve with pita or lavash bread.

\*Compared with the more popular globe eggplant, Chinese eggplant have thinner skins, a more delicate flavor, and fewer seeds that tend to make the vegetable bitter. However, if you cannot find Chinese eggplant, choose globe eggplants that are small and thin, indicating they have fewer seeds.

\*\*Found in markets specializing in Middle Eastern products. You can make something similar with ¼ cup sour cream mixed with 1/2 teaspoon lime juice and a pinch of salt.

Use the same amount of this as is called for of the *kashk*.

### SAFFRON LIQUID

1 teaspoon saffron

2 ½ tablespoons hot water

Break up the saffron threads with your fingers. Add water and stir. (This will keep for several weeks in the refrigerator.)

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### KOU KOU SABZI (Green Herb Omelet)

1 cup cilantro, finely chopped

1 cup flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

1 cup dill, finely chopped

1 cup chives or scallions, including green tops, finely chopped

1/2 cup spinach leaves, washed and finely chopped

4 large eggs, beaten

1/3 cup fine breadcrumbs

1 teaspoon cinnamon

¼ teaspoon turmeric

½ teaspoon saffron liquid (see recipe above)

1/4 cup dried fenugreek leaves (optional)

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

In a bowl, combine the fresh herbs and spinach. In another bowl, mix the eggs, breadcrumbs, cinnamon, turmeric, fenugreek (optional), saffron liquid, salt, and pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the herbs and combine.

In a large non-stick skillet, heat the oil over medium heat until shimmering. Spread the oil around the pan to coat the bottom and sides. Pour the herb mixture into the pan, spreading it evenly with a spoon. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, covered, until the egg is cooked through, about 10 to 12 minutes.

To serve, carefully invert onto a serving platter. Cut into wedges. Can be served hot or room temperature.

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