



THE OLIVE AND THE GRAPE

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Muhammara

(Red Pepper-Pomegranate Molasses-and-Walnut Dip)

by Paula Wolfert

This is one of the outstanding dips of the eastern Mediterranean, as delicious and striking as the far more famous hummus and baba ghanoush. Try it with meat or fish kabobs, or simply with crisp pita triangles or warmed, floppy lavash*. The dip will keep for one week in a closed container in the refrigerator, improving a little each day. Remember to return the dip to room temperature before serving. Makes about 3 cups.

Ingredients

2 1/2 pounds	sweet red bell peppers
1 small	hot chile pepper or 1 tablespoon Turkish red pepper* paste
1 1/2 cups	walnuts
1/2 cup	wheat crackers or zweibach
1 tablespoon	lemon juice
2 tablespoon	pomegranate molasses*, or more to taste
1/2 teaspoon	ground cumin, more for garnish
	Salt to taste
1/2 teaspoon	sugar
2 tablespoons	olive oil*, more for garnish

1. Roast the peppers and chili over a gas burner or under a broiler, turning frequently until blackened and blistered all over, about 12 minutes. Place in a covered bowl to steam for 10 minutes. Rub off the skins, slit peppers open, and remove stems, membranes and seeds. Spread the peppers, smooth side up, on a paper towel and let drain for 10 minutes.

2. In a food processor, grind the walnuts and crackers with the lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, cumin, salt, and sugar until smooth. Add the bell peppers and process until puréed and creamy.

3. With the machine on, add the olive oil in a thin stream. Add the chile to taste. If the paste is too thick, thin with 1 to 2 tablespoons of water. Refrigerate overnight.

4. To serve, let the dip come to room temperature and sprinkle with cumin and olive oil.

* These items are available at *The Olive and The Grape*.