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EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com.



MUHAMMARA—Syrian Roasted Red Pepper & Walnut Dip & Spread

Naturally Delicious Recipes • Janice Feuer-Haugen

Richly colored, crunchy textured, and bursting with flavor, Muhammara helps celebrate the holidays deliciously. Originating in Syria, Muhammara is undeniably a standout, whether on its own, as a dip for crudites or pita, or slathered on a sandwich. Deep-red Muhammara, which is Arabic for “reddened,” is a most healthy and delicious alternative to hummus—everyone’s *previously* favorite dip!

Based on an online search, I learned to pronounce this Syrian specialty as *mu-ham-ma-ra*. Although, you might prefer one of these other possibilities: *mu-HUMM-a-ra*, *moo-hahm-MRAH*, or *mooah-MARA*. 😊

Despite the number of pronunciations and recipes, the ingredients are mostly the same, though perhaps treated differently. The givens include red peppers (roasted or not), walnuts (toasted or not), pomegranate molasses, and Aleppo red pepper flakes. The variations include differing spices and quantities, as well as differing textures from coarsely chopped to smoothly puréed. Thus, it took a bit of research, tasting and refining to create today’s Muhammara recipe.

Pomegranate Molasses

A key flavor in Muhammara comes from uniquely tart and sweet Pomegranate Molasses. It’s so delicious you may find yourself wanting to eat it with a spoon! Find it in Middle Eastern stores, some well-stocked supermarkets, and of course, online. *Al Wadi Pomegranate Molasses* from OliveNation is a brand I like, as its only ingredient is pomegranate juice (available on Amazon).



Easily Made at Home

Another option is to make your own pomegranate molasses. Simply simmer two cups of unsweetened pomegranate juice, uncovered, in a small saucepan over low heat until it reduces to one-half cup. Cool the pomegranate molasses completely before transferring it to an airtight jar. Pomegranate molasses can be stored in the refrigerator for several months.

Sweet Red Bell Peppers—Nutritionally Speaking

Composed of 92% water, sweet red bell peppers are low in calories. The other 8% is fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, especially carotenoids. Red peppers are loaded with vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C, along with Vitamins A, E, B6, B9 (folate) and K1. Among the minerals are iron and potassium.

The list of carotenoids and their benefits is impressive. Beginning with capsanthin, which makes ripe bell peppers red, quercetin which helps prevent diseases such as heart disease and cancer, and zeaxanthin (which protects the eyes, as it helps reduce the risk of both cataracts and macular degeneration).

Additionally, all bell peppers are among the top seven plant foods (along with cruciferous vegetables and leafy greens) to help fight depression. ■

Recipe on next page...

MUHAMMARA—

Syrian Roasted Red Pepper & Walnut Dip & Spread

Intensely flavored and vegan, Muhammara can easily be made gluten-free by using gluten-free breadcrumbs or an equal amount of cooked quinoa. Serve Muhammara at room temperature, perhaps drizzled lightly with your favorite extra virgin olive oil. Serve it as a dip with crudités, pita bread or lettuce leaves. Or, possibly with veggie patties* or slathered on a sandwich.

NOTE: You can substitute 1 ½ cups jarred roasted, peeled red peppers for the fresh peppers in this recipe. As jarred peppers are moister than fresh, use only two tablespoons of olive oil. ♥

**Makes almost 2 cups.
Start-to-finish, 30 minutes.**

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound red bell peppers
- ½ cup walnuts
- 1 medium clove garlic, peeled
- 1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
- 2 teaspoons Aleppo pepper flakes
- 1 ½ teaspoons ground cumin
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses
- 1 ½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil or vegetable broth

PREPARATION

- 1) Turn the broiler on to low. Adjust the broiler shelf about 5 inches from the heating element.
- 2) Cut the peppers in half and remove the stem and seeds. Cut a few 1-inch slits in the bottom and top edges of each half.
- 3) Lightly oil a rimmed baking sheet. Flatten the peppers on the pan by gently pressing down on each half.



4) Broil the peppers on low for 12–15 minutes or until their skin is blackened. Remove the peppers from the oven. Immediately cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil. Set aside to cool.

5) Turn off the broiler and turn the oven on to 300 degrees.

6) Lightly toast the walnuts for 8 minutes. Remove them from the oven and set aside.

7) With the food processor running, drop in the garlic until finely chopped. Use a rubber spatula to scrape down the sides of the processor bowl.

8) Add the breadcrumbs or quinoa, walnuts, Aleppo pepper flakes, cumin and salt. Pulse just to blend.

9) Remove the foil and peel the peppers, removing as much of the skin as possible. Discard the skin. Do not rinse the peppers.

10) Add the roasted, peeled peppers, pomegranate molasses, fresh lemon juice, and olive oil or flavorful vegetable broth to the processor. Use the pulse button to combine the mixture, leaving it coarsely textured.

11) Serve Muhammara as a dip with hearts of romaine or butter lettuce, fresh vegetables, crackers and/or pita bread. Also delicious as a spread for veggie patties* or on a sandwich.

12) Muhammara will keep refrigerated in an airtight container for about a week. ■

*View my veggie patties recipe here at: EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com.

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