

Baby gem lettuce with burnt aubergine yoghurt, smacked cucumber and shatta

This works well either as a stand-alone starter or as part of a spread or side. It's lovely with some hot smoked salmon or trout. 'Smacked' cucumbers sounds a bit dramatic but, really, it's just a way of bruising them so as to allow all the flavour to seep through to the flesh. Thanks to Ottolenghi chef Calvin Von Niebel for this salad.

Getting ahead: Make all the elements well in advance, here, if you like: up to a day for the cucumber and the aubergine yoghurt, and the shatta needs to be made in advance, so you'll be all set here.

Playing around: Some crumbled feta on top works very well, and if you don't have the Urfa chilli flakes, just use a pinch of black nigella seeds or some black sesame seeds.

There are two ways to chargrill the aubergines: on an open flame on the stove top, or in a chargrill pan on an induction hob followed by 10 minutes in a hot oven. See page 335 for more detailed instructions. Once cooked, the scooped-out flesh should weigh about 160g. Place this in the bowl of a food processor along with the yoghurt, garlic, lemon juice, tahini and ½ teaspoon of salt. Blitz for about a minute, until completely smooth, then set aside until needed.

Prepare the cucumber by placing each half on a chopping board, cut side facing down. Using the flat side of a large knife, lightly 'smack' them until bruised but still holding their shape. Cut the cucumber into roughly 1cm dice and set aside.

Clean the food processor, then add the parsley, mint, garlic, olive oil and ¼ teaspoon of salt. Blitz for about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides a couple of times if you need to, to form a smooth paste, then add to the cucumber. Set aside for at least 20 minutes (and up to a day in advance if kept in the fridge) for the flavours to infuse.

Slice each head of baby gem lengthways to make 8 long thin wedges (per lettuce). When ready to assemble, arrange the lettuce on a round platter, overlapping the outer and inner circle to look like the petals of a flower. Lightly sprinkle the wedges with salt and a grind of black pepper, then splatter over the aubergine yoghurt. Spoon over the cucumber, drizzle with the shatta, sprinkle over the chilli flakes and serve.

Serves four generously

5–6 baby gem lettuces (500g),
bases trimmed
1½ tbsp shatta (red or green) (see
page 73) (or rose harissa, as an
alternative)
½ tsp Urfa chilli flakes (or a small
pinch of nigella seeds or black
sesame seeds, as an alternative)
Salt and black pepper

Aubergine yoghurt

2 large aubergines (500g)
35g Greek-style yoghurt
½ a garlic clove, roughly chopped
1½ tbsp lemon juice
1½ tbsp tahini (25g)

Smacked cucumber

1 regular English (i.e. not a small
Lebanese) cucumber, peeled,
sliced in half lengthways and
watery seeds removed (180g)
25g parsley, roughly chopped
25g mint leaves, roughly chopped
½ a garlic clove, roughly chopped
50ml olive oil



Roasted cauliflower and burnt aubergine with tomato salsa

We spent three nights in Haifa on one of our trips and spent two of those eating supper at the same restaurant, Fattoush, in town. The reason we went back two nights in a row was because we ate a version of this salad the first night and then went to bed dreaming about it. We went back the next night and duly ordered a whole portion each. All the elements here are delicious in and of themselves: the combination of all three is positively wonderful.

Getting ahead: You can char and marinate the aubergine a day or two ahead, then finish the dish off on the day of serving.

There are two ways to char your aubergines: either directly on the flame of your stove top or in a hot oven. The oven takes longer – 55–60 minutes (rather than 15–20 minutes on the stove). For full instructions see page 335.

Once the flesh has been scooped out of the burnt aubergines it should weigh about 500g. Place in a colander set over a bowl and leave for at least an hour (or overnight, in the fridge), to drain. Once drained, put the aubergine flesh into a medium mixing bowl and, using your hands, pull it apart to create long, thin strands. Add the garlic, lemon, vinegar and 1 teaspoon of salt. Mix to combine and set aside (in the fridge if you are making this a day ahead).

Preheat the oven to 200°C fan.

Put the cauliflower into a large bowl along with the olive oil, coriander seeds, turmeric, ¾ teaspoon of salt and a good grind of pepper. Mix well to combine, then spread out on a parchment-lined baking tray. Roast for 30 minutes, until the cauliflower is golden and tender. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool to room temperature.

While the cauliflower is roasting, place all the ingredients for the salsa in a bowl with ½ teaspoon of salt. Mix to combine.

To assemble the dish, spread the aubergine on a serving plate which has a lip and arrange the cauliflower on top. Spoon over the salsa, sprinkle over the mint and parsley and serve.

Pictured overleaf

Serves four generously

4 large aubergines, pricked in a few places with a small, sharp knife (1kg)
1 garlic clove, crushed
1½ tsp lemon juice
2 tbsp cider vinegar
1 large cauliflower (or 2 medium), cut into roughly 3cm florets (800g)
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp coriander seeds
¾ tsp ground turmeric
Salt and black pepper

Tomato salsa

3 large tomatoes, cut into ½cm dice (240g)
10g parsley, roughly chopped
1 tbsp oregano leaves, roughly chopped
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp lemon juice

To serve

5g picked mint leaves (small ones if you can, or else larger ones, shredded)
5g picked parsley leaves, roughly chopped

Serves four as a starter or side

4 medium aubergines (1kg)
60ml olive oil
20g pistachio kernels, lightly toasted (see page 339) and roughly chopped
5g picked mint leaves
5g picked dill leaves
¼ tsp Aleppo chilli flakes (or ⅛ tsp regular chilli flakes)
Salt and black pepper

Feta yoghurt

10ml whole milk
1 tbsp lemon juice
75g feta, finely crumbled
300g Greek-style yoghurt

Roasted aubergine, feta yoghurt, Aleppo chilli and pistachio

There are lots more sheep and goats than there are cows in Palestine as cows are not traditionally reared. Much of the yoghurt and cheese, therefore, is made from sheep's or goat's milk. It's tangy – sour, even – in a way that works particularly well against the rich 'meatiness' of roasted aubergine. The further the yoghurt or cheese is taken – whether that's being hung in the case of labneh (see page 48) or fermented in the case of kishek (see page 54) – the more intense the tanginess. Here – in this dish which often features on the Ottolenghi menu – we use feta. It has a similar tangy-sour flavour profile at the same time as being instantly ready to use.

Getting ahead: If you want to get ahead, all the various elements can be made up to a day in advance. Keep the aubergine and the feta yoghurt in the fridge, separately, returning the aubergine to room temperature before serving.

Playing around: The feta yoghurt and other toppings work equally well on other roasted vegetables – roast wedges of beetroot or butternut squash, for example – as they do with the aubergine.

Preheat the oven to 220°C fan.

Cut each aubergine, lengthways, into wedges. They should be about 2cm wide at the base. Place them in a large bowl with the olive oil, ¼ teaspoon of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix to combine, then spread out on a parchment-lined baking tray. Roast for 30 minutes, until cooked through and golden brown, then remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

To make the feta yoghurt, put the milk, lemon juice, feta, yoghurt and ½ teaspoon of salt into a bowl. Whisk well to combine, breaking apart the feta until it almost disintegrates, then keep in the fridge until ready to serve.

Arrange the aubergine wedges on a large platter or individual serving plates and spoon over the feta yoghurt. Top with the pistachios, mint, dill and chilli flakes and serve.

Pictured overleaf

Roasted cod with a coriander crust

Samak mashew bil cozbara w al limon

The combination of fish and tahini is one we find hard to resist, but this works just as well without the tahini sauce if you're looking for a shortcut or want to keep the focus on the lemon. Either way, this is as close to fast food as you can get. It's a 15-minute meal to make, beginning to end. Possibly even less time to eat.

If you are using the tahini sauce, make the whole quantity of the master recipe on page 87. It keeps in the fridge for about 4 days and is lovely to have around to drizzle over all sorts of roasted vegetables, meat, fish and salads.

Playing around: Any other meaty white fish works just as well here: sea bass and halibut, for example. Salmon also works well.

Preheat the oven to 250°C fan.

Put 2 tablespoons of oil into a small saucepan and place on a medium-low heat. Add the crushed garlic and cook for 10 seconds, then add the coriander, fish spice mix, chilli flakes, ¼ teaspoon of salt and a grind of black pepper. Cook for 4–5 minutes, stirring frequently, for the garlic to really soften, then remove from the heat.

Place the cod in a parchment-lined roasting dish, skin side down, and brush with the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil. Season lightly with salt and pepper then spoon the coriander mix on top of each fillet. Spread it out so that the whole top is covered, then top each one with a bay leaf, if using, along with 2 slices of lemon. Roast for 7–8 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through. Serve at once, with about a tablespoon of tahini sauce drizzled over, if using, and a wedge of lemon alongside.

Pictured overleaf

Serves four

60ml olive oil
4 garlic cloves, crushed
50g coriander, finely chopped
2½ tsp fish spice mix (see page 190)
½ tsp chilli flakes
4 large cod loin (or another sustainably sourced white fish), skin on (about 700g)
4 large fresh bay leaves (optional)
2 lemons: cut one into 8 very thin slices, and quarter the other lengthways, into wedges, to serve
About 4 tbsp/65g tahini sauce (optional) (see page 87), to serve
Salt and black pepper

Serves four

100ml olive oil
4 tsp fish spice mix (see page 190)
8 sea bass fillets, skin on and lightly scored, halved widthways at a slight angle (680g)
1 onion, thinly sliced (150g)
5 garlic cloves, crushed
2½cm piece of ginger, peeled and finely grated (25g)
1 green chilli, finely chopped, seeds and all (15g)
1 tbsp tomato purée
1 x 400g tin of peeled plum tomatoes, blitzed in a food processor until smooth (see headnote)
1½ tsp caster sugar
20g dill, roughly chopped
25g coriander, roughly chopped, plus extra picked leaves to garnish
400ml chicken stock
150g datterini (or cherry) tomatoes
½ a lemon, very thinly sliced into rounds, pips discarded
Salt and black pepper

Seared sea bass with lemon and tomato sauce

This is our favourite sort of quick fish supper, particularly if you've made the sauce in advance. Serve with some rice, crusty white bread or just a spoon, if you prefer, to scoop up all the lovely juices.

Starting with a tin of plum tomatoes and blitzing it up (rather than starting with tinned chopped tomatoes or passata in the first instance) is well worth doing: the flavour of the blitzed up plum tomatoes is wonderfully intense. With the emphasis of this dish as much on the rich sauce as it is on the fish, it's worth taking this extra step here.

Getting ahead: The tomato sauce keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days or can be frozen.

Combine 2 tablespoons of oil, 2½ teaspoons of fish spice mix, 1 teaspoon of salt and a good grind of pepper together in a shallow dish. Add the scored sea bass, turning to coat, and set aside to marinate while you make the tomato sauce. You can do this up to 3 hours in advance, if you are getting ahead, but not for much longer than this, otherwise the fish will start to break down.

Put 2 tablespoons of oil into a large sauté pan and place on a medium-high heat. Once hot, add the onion and cook for about 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and browned. Add the garlic, ginger and chilli and cook for another minute or two, until fragrant. Add the remaining 1½ teaspoons of spice mix along with the tomato purée and cook for another 30 seconds. Add the tinned tomatoes, sugar, two-thirds of the dill and coriander, the stock, 1 teaspoon of salt and a good grind of pepper. Bring to the boil, then lower the heat to medium and cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the sauce is thick and rich. Keep warm on a low heat until needed.

In a small bowl, toss the fresh tomatoes with 2 teaspoons of oil. Place a large frying pan on a high heat and, once very hot, add the tomatoes. Cook for about 4 minutes, shaking the pan a few times, until charred all over. Add the lemon slices and cook for another 2–3 minutes, shaking the pan a few more times. Add this to the pan of tomato sauce along with the remaining herbs and keep warm until ready to serve.

Wipe clean the frying pan and place it on a medium-high heat along with 1½ teaspoons of oil. Once hot, add a quarter of the sea bass fillets, skin side down, pressing gently on the flesh so that the fish doesn't curl. Cook for 4 minutes, or until the skin is crisp and browned, then flip the fish over in the pan. Cook for another 30 seconds, then transfer to a plate. Continue with the remaining three batches, adding another 1½ teaspoons of oil to the pan before searing each batch.

Divide the sauce between four plates and top each with 4 pieces of sea bass. Sprinkle over some picked coriander leaves and serve at once.

Pictured overleaf



Chicken musakhan

Musakhan is the hugely popular national dish of Palestine: growing up, Sami ate it once a week, pulling a piece of chicken and sandwiching it between a piece of pita or flatbread. It's a dish to eat with your hands and with your friends, served from one pot or plate, for everyone to then tear at some of the bread and spoon over the chicken and topping for themselves.

Traditionally, musakhan was made around the olive oil pressing season in October or November to celebrate (and gauge the quality of) the freshly pressed oil. The taboon bread would be cooked in a hot taboon oven (see page 341) lined with smooth round stones, to create small craters in the bread in which the meat juices, onion and olive oil all happily pool. It's cooked year-round, nowadays, layered with shop-bought taboon or pita bread, and is a dish to suit all occasions: easy and comforting enough to be the perfect week-night supper as it is, but also special enough to stand alongside other dishes at a feast.

Playing around: The chicken can be replaced with thick slices of roasted aubergine or chunky cauliflower florets, if you like (or a mixture of both), for a vegetarian alternative. If you do this, toss the slices or florets in the oil and spices, as you do the chicken, and roast at 200°C fan for about 25 minutes for the cauliflower and about 35 minutes for the aubergine.

Preheat the oven to 200°C fan.

Place the chicken in a large mixing bowl with 2 tablespoons of oil, 1 teaspoon of cumin, 1½ teaspoons of sumac, the cinnamon, allspice, 1 teaspoon of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well to combine, then spread out on a parchment-lined baking tray. Roast until the chicken is cooked through. This will take about 30 minutes if starting with supremes and up to 45 minutes if starting with the whole chicken, quartered. Remove from the oven and set aside. Don't discard any juices which have collected in the tray.

Meanwhile, put 2 tablespoons of oil into a large sauté pan, about 24cm, and place on a medium heat. Add the pine nuts and cook for about 2–3 minutes, stirring constantly, until the nuts are golden brown. Transfer to a bowl lined with kitchen paper (leaving the oil behind in the pan) and set aside. Add the remaining 60ml of oil to the pan, along with the onions and ¾ teaspoon of salt. Return to a medium heat for about 15 minutes, stirring from time to time, until the onions are completely soft and pale golden but not caramelised. Add 2 tablespoons of sumac, the remaining 2 teaspoons of cumin and a grind of black pepper and mix through, until the onions are completely coated. Remove from the heat and set aside.

When ready to assemble the dish, set the oven to a grill setting and slice or tear the bread into quarters or sixths. Place them under the grill for about 2–3 minutes, to crisp up, then arrange them on a large platter. Top the bread with half the onions, followed by all the chicken and any chicken juices left in the tray. Either keep each piece of chicken as it is or else roughly shred it as you plate up, into two or three large chunks. Spoon the remaining onions over the top and sprinkle with the pine nuts, parsley, 1½ teaspoons of sumac and a final drizzle of olive oil. Serve at once, with the yoghurt and a wedge of lemon alongside.

Serves four

1 chicken (about 1.7kg), divided into 4 pieces (1.4kg) or 1kg chicken supremes (between 4 and 6, depending on size), skin on, if you prefer
120ml olive oil, plus 2–3 tbsp extra, to finish
1 tbsp ground cumin
3 tbsp sumac
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground allspice
30g pine nuts
3 large red onions, thinly sliced 2–3mm thick (500g)
4 taboon breads (see headnote), or any flatbread (such as Arabic flatbread or naan bread) (330g)
5g parsley leaves, roughly chopped
Salt and black pepper

To serve

300g Greek-style yoghurt
1 lemon, quartered



Sweet tahini rolls

Kubez el tahini

The journey of these rolls can be traced through Lebanon to Armenia, where these kubez el tahini come from. They are simple to make, impressive to look at and loved by all. They're a particular favourite with kids. Eat them as they are, or sliced and spread with dibs w tahini, the Palestinian equivalent of peanut butter and jam, where creamy tahini is mixed through with a little bit of grape or date molasses (see page 336).

Keeping notes: These are best eaten fresh on the day of baking but are also fine for 2–3 days once baked, warmed through in the oven. They also freeze well, after they've been baked and left to cool: you can pop them into the oven straight from the freezer until warmed through.

Makes 10 rolls

Dough

1½ tsp fast-action dried yeast
1 tsp caster sugar
110ml whole milk, lukewarm
300g plain flour, plus extra
for dusting
75g unsalted butter, melted
1 egg, lightly beaten
Olive oil, for greasing
Salt

Filling

100g caster sugar
1 tsp ground cinnamon
120g tahini

Topping

1 egg yolk, beaten
1 tbsp white sesame seeds

First make the dough. Put the yeast, sugar and milk into a small bowl and mix to combine. Set aside for 5 minutes, until it starts to get frothy.

Meanwhile, put the flour and ½ teaspoon of salt into the bowl of a free-standing mixer, with the dough hook in place. Mix on a low speed, then slowly pour in the yeast mixture. Add the melted butter and continue to mix for about a minute.

Add the egg, then increase the speed to medium and leave for 5 minutes, for the dough to get well kneaded. Using your hands, scrape the dough into a ball: it will be slightly sticky and elastic. Place it in a lightly oiled bowl, turning it a couple of times so that the dough gets well greased. Cover the bowl with a clean tea towel and leave to rest in a warm place for about 1 hour, or until almost doubled in size.

Put the sugar and cinnamon for the filling into a small bowl. Mix well to combine, then set aside.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough into a large rectangle, about 35 x 50cm. Drizzle the tahini over the dough, then, using the back of a spoon or a spatula, spread it out evenly, leaving 1cm clear of tahini at both the shorter ends. Sprinkle the sugar mixture evenly over the tahini and leave for 10 minutes, until the sugar looks all wet.

Starting from one of the long sides, roll the dough inwards to form a long, thin sausage. Trim away about 2cm from each end, then slice the dough into 10 equal pieces: they should each be just over 4½cm long. Sit each piece upright, so that its cut side is facing upwards, then, using your hands, gently flatten out to form an 8cm-wide circle. Cover with a damp tea towel and leave to rest for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan.

Transfer each roll of dough to a large parchment-lined baking tray, spaced 2–3cm apart. Brush all over – just the top and sides, not the base – with the egg yolk, sprinkle with sesame seeds, and bake on the middle shelf of the oven for 18 minutes, or until cooked through and golden. Remove from the oven and set aside for about 20 minutes – you don't want them to be piping hot – then serve.

Labneh cheesecake with roasted apricots, honey and cardamom

Cheesecake is not, traditionally, a dessert eaten in Palestine, but all the ingredients are: the labneh and filo, for example, the nuts and floral orange blossom. The base was Noor's idea: blitzing up the sheets of filo to make crumbs. Mixing this with the nuts calls baklava to mind. The result, we think, is distinct and special.

Getting ahead: If you are making your own labneh (which couldn't be easier: it just requires getting organised a day ahead), then it needs to be made 1–5 days before using. To get the 500g of labneh required, you'll need to start with 820g of Greek-style yoghurt, mixed with $\frac{2}{3}$ teaspoon of salt (see page 48 for the recipe). The base and cheesecake are best baked the day before serving, so that it can chill in the fridge overnight. The apricots are best roasted and put on top of the cake on the day of serving. Once assembled, the cake is best eaten the same day.

Playing around: Rose water or vanilla extract can be used instead of the orange blossom water, if you like. If using vanilla in the filling, use $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of vanilla paste or the scraped seeds of $\frac{1}{2}$ a vanilla pod, in addition to the vanilla extract already there. Lots of other fruits – stone fruits or otherwise – work as well as the apricots here. Peaches, plums and cherries are also good, as are strawberries. As ever, with nuts, other nuts can be used apart from those we suggest: Brazil nuts, for example, or macadamia nuts. They both work well in any combination in the base: just keep the net weight the same.

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan. Grease and line the base and sides of a 23cm springform baking tin and set aside.

To make the base, lay out one sheet of filo on a clean work surface. Measure out a third of the butter – this will be used for brushing the sheets – and set the remaining 60g aside for later. Brush the sheet until well coated, then top with the second filo sheet. Continue in this fashion until all the filo and butter has been used up, finishing the last layer with a coating of butter. Transfer the filo stack to a parchment-lined baking tray and bake for about 20 minutes, or until golden and crispy. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 15 minutes (or longer) before breaking apart into large shards. In two batches, place the shards in a food processor and blitz for about 10 seconds, to form fine crumbs. Place in a medium bowl, then add the nuts to the processor. Blitz for about 20 seconds, until fine but not powdery. Add the nuts to the filo along with the flour, sugar, spices, flaked salt and remaining two-thirds of butter and mix to combine. Tip the mixture into the base of the lined tin and press it down firmly and evenly so that the whole base is covered. Bake for 12 minutes, or until lightly golden. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

Continued overleaf

Serves ten to twelve

Base

5 sheets of good-quality filo pastry (about 110g)
90g unsalted butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
40g walnut halves
60g pistachio kernels
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp plain flour
50g caster sugar
10 cardamom pods, shells discarded and seeds finely crushed in a pestle and mortar (or $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground cardamom)
1 tsp ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp flaked sea salt

Filling

500g labneh (either shop-bought or 850g of Greek-style yoghurt, see headnote and page 48, if making your own)
500g ricotta
210g caster sugar
 $\frac{2}{3}$ tsp flaked sea salt
5 eggs (2 whole, and 3 with yolks and whites separated: you will only be using the yolks of these)
2 tsp finely grated orange zest
1 tbsp orange blossom water
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp vanilla extract
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp cornflour

Topping

75g runny honey
2 tsp orange blossom water
40ml orange juice
6 cardamom pods, shells on, seeds roughly bashed together in a pestle and mortar
350g ripe apricots, stones removed, cut into 6 wedges
A small handful of picked mint leaves, to garnish (optional)

