Aubergine, Tahini and Chickpea Plates

2 plates, each with one aubergine half, 120 g (4.2 oz) chickpeas, half the full sauce and one 60 g (2.1 oz) pita | Active 18 min | Cook 14 min | Total 40 min

Ingredients

- 1 medium aubergine, about 300 g (10.6 oz), washed, stalk removed and cut lengthways into 2 halves
- 75 ml (5 US tbsp) water, divided: 45 ml (3 US tbsp) for aubergine and 30 ml (2 US tbsp) for chickpeas
- 10 ml (2 US tsp) olive oil, rubbed over the cut aubergine faces
- 240 g (8.5 oz) ready-to-eat canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 g ground cumin, about 1/2 US tsp
- 1 g sweet paprika, about 1/2 US tsp
- 1 g fine salt, divided: 0.5 g for chickpeas and 0.5 g for sauce
- 30 g (1.1 oz) commercially prepared ready-to-eat tahini, stirred before weighing
- 25 ml (1 US tbsp plus 2 US tsp) lemon juice
- 30 ml (2 US tbsp) separate water for the tahini sauce
- 3 g garlic, about 1 small clove, very finely grated
- 2 ready-to-eat soft pita breads, 60 g (2.1 oz) each, 120 g (4.2 oz) total

Set out

1000 W microwave with turntable, Shallow microwave-safe dish, about 25 cm (10 in) across and at least 1.5 L (1.6 US qt) capacity, with room to rotate, Microwave-safe vented cover for dish, Microwave-safe bowl, 1 L (1.1 US qt), with vented cover, Microwave-safe plate for pita, Knife and board, Broad spoon, Small sauce bowl and fork, Kitchen scale and measuring jug, Food thermometer, Oven mitts, Two serving plates

Allergens

Sesame, Wheat. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Score the aubergine flesh in a 1 cm grid about 1 cm deep without cutting through its skin. Rub all the olive oil over the cut faces. Put 45 ml water in the shallow dish, arrange the halves cut-side down and cover with the vented cover. Microwave at 1000 W full power for 5 minutes. Turn the halves carefully, cover again and cook 2-4 minutes more until the flesh is completely soft and easily scooped. Keep covered outside the oven, retaining the juices.

2. Put chickpeas, the other 30 ml of cooking water, cumin, paprika and their 0.5 g salt in the 1 L bowl. Cover and microwave at full power for 2 minutes, stir, then heat 1-2 minutes more until 165°F/74°C in the center and several other places. Leave covered for 2 minutes.

3. During the chickpea cook or stand, stir tahini, lemon juice, the separate 30 ml sauce water, garlic and remaining 0.5 g salt in the small bowl until smooth. During the chickpea stand, warm the 2 ready-to-eat pitas on a covered microwave-safe plate at full power for 20 seconds, turn them and heat 10-20 seconds more if needed. Follow any longer packet method in full instead of shortening it.

4. Place one tender aubergine half on each plate, dividing its retained steaming juices between them. Add half the chickpeas and all their cooking liquid to each, then spoon half the entire tahini sauce over each plate. Serve one 60 g pita with each portion and eat promptly.

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Three water allocations

The two hot stages share 75 ml water: 45 ml aubergine plus 30 ml chickpeas. The sauce has its own separate 30 ml. Keep those measures distinct rather than adding an unmeasured splash.

No charred-skin promise

The aubergine should be tender and moist. This is a covered steam cook, so dark grill marks or a smoky blackened surface would misrepresent the written method.

Ingredient labels

Tahini contains sesame. Pita may also contain milk, soy or additional allergens; check its label.

A useful detail

The 40-minute estimate allows scoring, draining and sauce mixing, up to 9 minutes aubergine heating, up to 4 minutes chickpeas and less than 1 minute chosen pita warming. Pitas warm during the 2-minute chickpea stand. All heating uses one oven sequentially; the aubergine stays covered during the short finishing sequence. A thicker aubergine or longer pita label instruction can extend the clock.

Another way

Replace chickpeas with 240 g (8.5 oz) drained ready-to-eat canned butter beans. Stir gently and use the same even-heating endpoint.

Replace the 1 g cumin with 1 g ground coriander, about 1/2 US tsp, at the same chickpea heating stage.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 2 days. Keep pita dry and sauce chilled separately if saving a portion. Reheat aubergine and chickpeas once, covered and stirred or turned, to 165°F/74°C throughout, then stand covered for 2 minutes. Add the cold separately stored sauce just before eating; this fresh garlic sauce is not a shelf-stable preserve.