Roast Pear and Lentil Pita Pockets

12 half-pita pockets with pear-lentil filling; 1 filled half per buffet portion | Active 35 min | Cook 25 min | Total 145 min (cold service and transport) | Cold-travel planning: 145 min; follow the stated cooling endpoint and finishing route.

Ingredients

- 1 lb (450 g) firm pears, cored and cut into 1/2 in/1 cm dice, prepared weight
- 2 tbsp (30 ml/28 g) olive oil, divided: 1 tbsp for pears and 1 tbsp for dressing
- 2 cans ready-to-eat lentils, drained and rinsed to give 17 oz (480 g)
- 2 celery stalks, finely diced, 100 g prepared weight
- 4 1/4 oz (120 g) pasteurized-milk feta, crumbled
- 1/2 cup (60 g) walnut pieces, chopped
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) lemon juice
- 2 tsp (10 g) Dijon mustard
- 1 1/2 tsp (10 g) honey
- 1/3 tsp (2 g) fine salt
- 1/4 tsp (0.5 g) black pepper
- 6 small pitas, about 2 oz/60 g each, 12 3/4 oz/360 g total

Set out

Oven, Rimmed baking sheet, Mixing bowl with lid, Small dressing bowl, Knife, Colander, Shallow cooling tray, Pita bag or dry box, Two clean serving spoons, Cooler with ice packs

Allergens

Wheat, Milk, Walnuts, Mustard, Celery. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Toss the pear dice with 1 tbsp oil on the tray. Roast 18-25 minutes, turning once, until tender but still holding pieces. Spread on a clean shallow tray and let steam escape 10 minutes, then refrigerate to cool.

2. Whisk the remaining 1 tbsp oil, lemon juice, mustard, honey, salt and pepper. Mix the drained lentils and celery with the dressing. Once the pears are cool, fold them in with the feta, keeping the pieces recognizable. Cover and refrigerate until at 40°F (4°C) or below, allowing at least 1 hour. Keep walnuts in a separate dry container.

3. Cut each pita across the middle to make 12 half-pockets. Gently open them without tearing the bottom. Keep dry until serving. At the gathering, divide all lentil filling among the 12 halves, about 1/3-1/2 cup each depending on the pita shape, and divide the walnuts over them. If a pita is narrow, serve the excess filling alongside on the same plate rather than forcing it through the seam.

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Bring it

Transport the fully chilled lentil-pear filling at 40°F (4°C) or below with ice packs. Carry pitas and walnuts separately and include a filling spoon and a walnut spoon. During packing, travel and display, keep cold food at 40°F (4°C) or below and hot food at 140°F (60°C) or above. Allow no more than 2 hours combined outside those controls, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Discard food beyond that limit.

Finish at the gathering

No oven or stove is needed. Allow 5 minutes to open the pita halves and put the filling bowl into ice. Set out six pockets first, keeping the remaining filling cold, then replenish with a clean bowl.

Make it yours

The pear-feta combination fits a winter lunch party; the apple variation suits an autumn anniversary. Offer a sample half-pocket so guests can see the intended modest fill rather than treating the bowl as twelve overflowing sandwiches.

Ingredient labels

Pitas may contain sesame or soy; check the actual label. Honey is unsuitable for children under 12 months.

A useful detail

The 145-minute total includes roasting, cooling, dressing and cold chilling before travel. The filling is intentionally moist but not soupy. A pocket’s usable opening varies by brand, so a small plate is part of the practical serving plan.

Another way

Use 450 g firm apples instead of pears; roast until just tender, which may take 5 minutes longer.

Replace walnuts with 60 g roasted ready-to-eat sunflower seeds, checking labels and cross-contact before making a nut-related assurance.

Keep it well

Keep the cold filling covered at 40°F (4°C) or below for up to 2 days, respecting any earlier feta deadline. Keep pitas and walnuts dry and separate. Lentil filling is not a shelf-stable salad. Discard assembled pockets that exceed the combined party limit rather than repacking them for another event. Respect the combined travel-and-display limit in “Bring it.”