



Smoky Baba Ghannouj Platter

White chocolate adds a new level of smoothness

- 1 medium eggplant, peeled, cut in chunks (about 2 cups)
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 small garlic head
- 1-1/2 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2-1/2 Tablespoons tahini
- 1-ounce white chocolate, melted
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Appetizer Platter Vegetables:

- 1 (7 oz.) jar artichoke hearts
- 2 thick slices red onion

Olive oil spray as needed
4 to 6 celery heart stalks, trimmed
4 fresh small radishes with leaves
1 mini red sweet pepper, seeded, minced
Minced parsley as desired
Serve with: Pita chips as desired

Preheat oven to 400-degree F. Use shallow rimmed baking pan.

Prepare Eggplant and Garlic: Using aluminum foil, place eggplant chunks in center of 12-inch piece of foil; toss eggplant with 2 Tablespoons oil; bring edges up to seal into bag packet. Slice off top of garlic, exposing cloves; place on smaller foil piece; spoon 1 Tablespoon oil over top; wrap in foil, sealing garlic inside. Place on baking pan; bake in 400-degree F. oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until garlic and eggplant are soft.

Prepare Baba Ghannouj: Place soften eggplant and soft garlic in food processor; discard garlic skins. Process several times to combine. Add lemon juice, tahini, melted white chocolate, 2 Tablespoons parsley; cumin, and smoked paprika; process into very smooth creamy mixture. Season with additional salt and black pepper to taste. Spoon eggplant mixture into small bowl; set aside.

Broil Artichokes and Onions: Remove artichoke hearts from jar liquid; pat dry; place on foil lined baking pan; place onion slices on baking pan; sprinkle with salt and black pepper; spray artichokes and onions lightly with olive oil spray. Broil in hot broiler for 8 minutes or light brown; turn artichokes and onions over; season; spray with olive oil; broil for another 6 minutes or starting to brown. Watch carefully since different broilers have different broiling times.

To Serve: Put Baba Ghanouj bowl on platter. Arrange celery hearts sticks, radishes, onions, and artichokes on platter. Sprinkle Baba Ghanouj with minced red peppers and minced parsley. If desired, drizzle a little of the artichoke liquid from the jar over the vegetables. Garnish with crunchy pita chips.

Cook's Note: You might be surprised that you can even eat those leaves on the fresh baby radishes.

About the Recipe: This classic Middle Eastern eggplant puree develops a smooth silky texture with light touches of sweetness as it combines with the flavors of roasted garlic, lemon, cumin and smoked paprika. Serving it with fresh vegetables, broiled artichoke hearts, and some crunchy pita chips makes it an elegant appetizer or snack.