

Hummus

serves 4 to 6 (about 1 pint)

Hoummos bi Tahini (hum-moose bee ta-hee-nee)

Between the nutty-tasting tahini and the buttery texture of the garbanzo beans, this dish is not only flavorful, but a good source of protein. Prepared hummus is available in many markets, but the flavor is not like that of homemade hummus, which is so easy to prepare—especially using canned garbanzos—you may never buy it again. Another option is to soak dry garbanzo beans overnight and cook them the following day. Serve hummus with toasted pita dippers, crackers, fresh vegetables, or your favorite rustic bread.

Specialty ingredients: Tahini, found at specialty markets or online.

Special equipment: A food processor.

Prepare ahead: You can prepare hummus several days in advance and refrigerate it in an airtight container. Serve as directed.

For the beans

1/2 cup water

1 (15- or 16-ounce) can garbanzo beans (drained), about 1 3/4 cups

alternatively:

1 1/4 cups dried garbanzo beans

4 cups and 6 cups water, divided

1/2 teaspoon and 1/4 teaspoon baking soda, divided

1/2 teaspoon salt

For the hummus

2 large cloves garlic

1 teaspoon salt

1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

1/3 cup tahini (mix well before using)

To prepare the beans

In a small saucepan, place 1/2 cup water and the drained canned garbanzo beans (reserving 3 beans for the garnish) over high heat. Bring to a rolling boil and cook uncovered for about 1 minute, allowing half of the water to evaporate. For thicker hummus, let most of the water boil off.

Alternatively, to prepare dry beans, soak the beans in 4 cups water (so they are submerged) and 1/2 teaspoon baking soda overnight at room temperature, uncovered. (Note: The baking soda will soften the beans.) The following day, drain the beans and place them with the 1/2 teaspoon of salt in a medium-sized saucepan with 6 cups fresh water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Skim any foam off the top, then reduce the heat to medium-low and add 1/4 teaspoon baking soda. Cover and let the beans simmer for 20 to 30 minutes or until tender. Place 1 3/4 cups of the drained beans plus 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid in a small sauce pan and boil off half the water to prepare the hummus. Freeze the remaining 1 3/4 cups beans (see below).

To Freeze Cooked Garbanzos

Place the beans in a container and cover them with their cooking liquid. Freeze up to 4 months.

To prepare the hummus

Pour the boiled garbanzo beans and the remaining cooking liquid into a food processor fitted with a metal blade. Add the garlic and salt and process for 2 minutes. Use a spatula to scrape down the sides. Add the lemon juice and tahini and process for 1 minute more. Transfer the hummus to a container and cover with a paper towel and refrigerate. Cover with the lid once cooled. Serve at room temperature.

To serve

Place room-temperature hummus in the center of a flat serving dish. Use the back of a spoon to spread the hummus over the dish so there is an outer raised lip around the perimeter, with a central “canal” around a raised mound in the center. Place a radish star on the raised mound surrounded by 3 garbanzo beans. Garnish with a few sprigs of parsley and sprinkle the center and around the perimeter with paprika. Pour extra-virgin olive oil in the central canal formed with the back of the spoon.

{Variations}

Hummus can be varied by adding one of the following ingredients.

Roasted Red Bell Pepper: Mix 3/4 cup drained and coarsely chopped roasted red bell pepper into the room-temperature hummus.

Cumin: Mix in 1 teaspoon ground cumin.

Horseradish: Mix in 2 tablespoons of prepared horseradish.

Sun-dried Tomato: Mix in 3/4 cup drained and coarsely chopped sun-dried tomatoes.