

Lablabi—Tunisian Chickpea Soup

I must admit I was equally skeptical and intrigued by this recipe and danced around it for several days before giving it a go. Worried it would taste like a bowl of warm hummus I had Plan B on the ready, but it was never required. The real problem turned out to be not making enough! Like with many cultural mainstays, it is the bringing together of good quality simple ingredients that make for kitchen magic, and you will soon discover that this soup is no exception.

Just an FYI- This recipe must be started 8 hours in advance with soaking the chickpeas

Ingredients

FOR THE CRISPY CHICKPEAS:

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cooked chickpeas or 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste

1 teaspoon za'atar, plus more to taste

FOR THE SOUP:

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups dried chickpeas, **soaked overnight and drained**

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving

2 bay leaves

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ loaf hearty rustic bread (about 8 ounces – I used this one)

1 cup chopped onion

6 garlic cloves, minced or finely grated (I used shallots)

1 tablespoon ground cumin, plus more for serving

2 chopped Roma tomatoes

1 tablespoon harissa paste or spice mix plus more for serving
(adjust this according to taste)

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest, for serving

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley, for serving

Crispy chickpeas:

Layout chickpeas on clean toweling to completely air dry for at least 30 mins.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees

Move chickpeas onto a parchment-covered baking sheet. Splash 2 -3 teaspoons of olive oil and toss well with salt and a sprinkle of za'atar.

Bake 15 mins or until crispy, add more seasoning if desired, and set aside to cool.

At the same time, you can toast the rustic bread until crispy for the soup. Tear in bite sized pieces, and place on a baking sheet for about 10 minutes.

Chickpeas for soup:

In a heavy stockpot or pressure cooker, combine drained soaked chickpeas, 5 cups water, 1 tablespoon olive oil, bay leaves, and 1/2 teaspoon salt over high heat. Bring to a boil for 2 to 3 minutes, then reduce heat to a simmer, cover, cooking until chickpeas are tender, 30 mins in the pressure cooker, and about 1 to 2 hours in a stockpot.

When the chickpeas for the soup are tender, discard bay leaves. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the chickpeas, 1/2 cup of the chickpea cooking liquid, and 1/4 cup olive oil to a blender or food processor, and purée until smooth. Set aside.

In a large skillet over medium-high, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil until shimmering. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic or shallots and cook until golden, about 2 minutes. Add the remaining 1 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon cumin, and tomatoes and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 1 minute. Add a splash of the chickpea cooking liquid to the pan, and bring to a simmer to deglaze, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Turn off heat.

Combine chickpea purée and onion mixture, remaining cooking liquid along with harissa and lemon juice, and stir well. Add water as needed if the soup seems too thick, and adjust seasonings.

Serve by dividing toasted bread pieces among soup bowls, add soup and garnish with lemon zest, parsley, olive oil, more cumin, and some of the crispy chickpeas. Serve hot, with more harissa on the side.

Enjoy!

Adapted from Melissa Clark NY Cooking

