

Lebanese Chickpeas Stew Recipe (Balila Inspired)

Cook: 35-45 minutes

Tender chickpeas simmer in a rich tomato-za'atar broth, brightened with lemon and herbs and finished with nutty sesame and olive oil. Comforting yet vibrant, it balances earthy warmth with zesty, aromatic lift.

Ingredients

- extra virgin olive oil (plus more for drizzling)
- onion (diced)
- garlic cloves (minced)
- red pepper (diced)
- bell pepper (diced)
- sweet potato (peeled and diced (optional))
- tomato paste
- tomato puree
- vegetable broth (low-sodium preferred)
- chickpeas (cooked or canned, drained and rinsed)
- white beans (optional)
- za'atar spice blend
- ground cumin
- bay leaf
- spinach or leafy greens
- lemon juice (freshly squeezed)
- sesame seeds (for garnish)
- to taste salt
- to taste black pepper (freshly cracked)
- rumi spice (optional)
- pickled red onions (optional, for serving)
- fresh parsley (optional, chopped, for garnish)
- warm flatbread (for serving)

Instructions

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add diced onion and cook until softened and lightly golden.

2. Stir in minced garlic, diced red pepper, and bell pepper; cook about 5 minutes until tender.
3. Add tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, 2–3 minutes to lightly caramelize and deepen the flavor.
4. Stir in tomato puree and vegetable broth. Add ground cumin, bay leaf, za'atar, a pinch of salt, and black pepper; bring to a simmer.
5. Add chickpeas and optional white beans. Reduce heat to low, cover, and cook 20–25 minutes until flavors meld.
6. Stir in spinach or other leafy greens during the last 5 minutes of cooking to gently wilt.
7. Finish with lemon juice to brighten. Adjust seasoning to taste. Serve hot topped with sesame seeds and a drizzle of olive oil, with warm flatbread on the side. Optional garnishes: pickled red onions and fresh parsley.
8. Slow cooker option: Add all ingredients except greens and lemon juice to the slow cooker; cook on low 6–8 hours. Stir in greens at the end and finish with lemon juice and sesame seeds.
9. Instant Pot option: Sauté onions, garlic, and peppers on Sauté mode. Add tomato paste and cook briefly. Stir in remaining ingredients; cook on High Pressure for 10 minutes. Quick release, then stir in greens and lemon juice.
10. Roasted variation: Toss peppers, onions, chickpeas, and tomato paste with olive oil; spread on a sheet pan or deep roasting tray and roast at 400°F (200°C) for 25 minutes. Transfer to a pot with broth, simmer briefly, then finish as above.

Tags: Lebanese, Middle Eastern, Vegan, One Pot, Stew, Chickpeas
