



Baba Ghanoush

There are two names for a Middle Eastern dip made from eggplant that's been heavily roasted – ideally over an open fire or charcoal to give it an addictively smoky aroma – mutabbal, and the better known baba ghanoush. Whether they're different names for the same thing, or subtly different, I haven't been able to determine. Lebanese-born Middle Eastern food authority, Anissa Helou, says that baba ghanoush is the Lebanese name and mutabbal is the Syrian one and in Lebanon mutabbal refers to a grilled eggplant salad which the Syrians call baba ghanoush! Call it what you will, the combination of smoky eggplant, creamy tahini and tangy lemon juice is delicious!

Serves 4 as part of a mezze

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large or 2 medium black eggplants (about 500g)
- 1 tablespoon tahini
- 2 teaspoons strained lemon juice, or more to taste
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 small clove garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes, crushed, or more to taste
- Za'atar, sumac, or Aleppo pepper, for serving (optional)



METHOD

1. Heat a barbecue or charcoal grill on high.
2. Prick the eggplant with a fork about 12–16 times all over.
3. Place on the grill and cook for about 20 minutes, turning regularly, until it's really well charred all over and very soft; I cook it for about 5 minutes on each of 4 sides.
4. Set aside until it's cool enough to handle.
5. Meanwhile, place tahini, lemon juice, garlic and salt into a large mixing bowl.
6. Halve eggplant lengthways, scrape all the flesh into a strainer, avoiding the charred skin but being sure to get the darkened flesh closest to the skin.
7. Set aside for 15 minutes or so to drain.
8. Add eggplant to the bowl and use a potato masher or fork to mash everything together really well to form a coarse purée.
9. Taste and add more salt or lemon juice if you like.
10. Spread into a shallow bowl, drizzle with oil and serve with a sprinkling of za'atar, sumac or Aleppo pepper if you like.