

Charred broccolini with muhammara

© Hetty Lui McKinnon for To Vegetables, With Love

This dish shows off the beautiful sweetness and meaty texture of seasonal broccolini. If you have barbecue, throw the the broccolini on the hot grills and don't be afraid to get some charring on the flowers and stem. In vegetable cooking, char and colour equals flavour.

Muhammara is a Middle Eastern dip that is made with walnut and roasted red capsicums (bell peppers). It is usually spiced with Syrian Aleppo chili pepper flakes which is distinctly mild and sweet. I've used red pepper flakes here as this is what I most often have in my pantry, but if you have Aleppo chili, please use it. I've taking a shortcut with my muhammara by using store-bought roasted capsicum/bell peppers (if you can find a "fire-roasted" variety, even better, as it will add a nice smokiness to the dip though I think this is only available in the US) but if you prefer, feel free to roast or grill your own capsicum (you'll only need to cook 1).

This is a light dish and a small serving, so double it if you are serving a crowd.

There are many ways to adapt this dish. If you are looking to make it heartier, you could add some legumes such as lentils or chickpeas, a grain like farro, pearl barley or quinoa, and top with some cheese such as ricotta, torn burrata or feta. Some flat bread or sourdough would be nice to mop up the vibrant dip.

Serves 2

225g (1/2 pound) broccolini, trimmed
extra virgin olive oil
sea salt and black pepper
1/4 cup toasted sliced almonds

Muhammara (makes about 1 cup)

125g (1/2 cup) store bought roasted capsicums/bell peppers, preferably fire roasted
60g (1/2 cup) cup toasted walnuts, roughly chopped
4 scallions, roughly chopped
1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon sea salt
1/2 teaspoon red chili/pepper flakes
2 teaspoons pomegranate molasses
3 teaspoons lemon juice (from about 1/2 small lemon)
60ml (1/4 cup) extra virgin olive oil

Substitutions

Walnuts: almonds, cashews, pumpkin seeds

Broccolini: broccoli, cauliflower

Cut each broccolini stem in half so that they are not as long. If you have any stems that are super thick, slice the stem in half so it cooks evenly.

Heat a large skillet (frying pan) on medium high. When hot, add a drizzle of olive oil and add the broccolini. Season with sea salt and black pepper and cook for 6-7 minutes, turning every minute or so, until the broccolini stems are just tender and some of it is charred.

To make the muhammara, place the roasted capsicums/bell peppers, walnuts, scallions, garlic, cumin, sea salt, red chili/pepper flakes, pomegranate molasses, lemon juice and olive oil into a blender or food processor and puree until completely smooth.

To serve, spread the muhammara onto a large plate and top with the broccolini. Scatter over the almonds and serve.