

Salt and Serenity

Labneh with Dukkah Topping

Labneh is essentially yogurt strained past the point of even Greek yogurt, until it is ultra-thick. Middle Eastern in origin, it is often referred to as yogurt cheese. Lush and creamy, the texture is somewhere between cream cheese and fresh chevre. If there is a Middle Eastern store in your area, you can probably buy labneh. If not, it's easy to make your own. Instructions are included below.

Recipe slightly adapted from LCBO Food & Drink Magazine, Summer 2020 issue
Serves 4-6 as an appetizer

Labneh:

900 grams full-fat (5-6%) yogurt (not Greek yogurt)

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons Diamond Crystal kosher salt

Dukkah:

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup pistachios

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup almonds

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup walnuts

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sesame seeds

1 Tablespoon coriander seed

1 Tablespoon cumin seed

1 tablespoon fennel seed

2 teaspoons sumac

1 teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt

Garnish:

2 Tablespoons good-quality olive oil

1 teaspoon lemon zest

1 Tablespoon chopped fresh mint

1 Tablespoon chopped Italian parsley

Serve with:

Pita bread, toasted or warmed in the oven, or pita chips

1. **Make labneh:** (omit this step if you can find store-bought labneh) Mix yogurt and salt in a bowl. Place a fine mesh sieve over a large bowl and line it with 2 layers of cheesecloth. Transfer the yogurt mixture into the cheesecloth lined sieve and bring the edges to cover the yogurt on the top. Place the bowl and sieve in the fridge for 24 to 48 hours. I strained mine for around 40 hours and it was perfect.
2. **Make dukkah:** Heat a 10-inch skillet over medium. Add pistachios, almonds, walnuts, and sesame seeds. Cook until toasted and fragrant, about 3-5 minutes, shaking the pan often. Let nuts and seeds cool and transfer them to a food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped.
3. Place coriander, cumin and fennel seeds in the skillet and cook until toasted and fragrant, about 2 minutes, shaking the pan often. Let cool and transfer spices to the food processor with the nut mixture.
4. Add sumac and salt to food processor then pulse until coarsely ground. Transfer mixture to a bowl.

5. **Assemble:** Spread the labneh in a shallow bowl or on a plate, making dents with the back of the spoon. Pour olive oil in around the divots. Top with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dukkah, lemon zest, mint, and parsley. The extra dukkah will keep well in the freezer. Use it to coat fish or chicken before baking.
6. Serve with warm pita, cut into triangles or pita chips.