

## Variations on a Hummus Theme

*(Let the dipping begin!)*

*This hummus is superior to most packaged ones. Customize. Amaze yourself and other eaters. Try a variation. Choose another. Serve with torn pita bread, or pita chips, or steamed veggies or sliced, peeled jicama. Serve this as a holiday rainbow of dips.*



### **Basic Hummus**

*Boiling the chickpeas with baking soda raises the pH and softens the beans and their skin, resulting in a smoother hummus.*

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and drained, or 1-½ cups cooked chickpeas
- ½ teaspoon baking soda (if you're using canned chickpeas)
- ¼ cup fresh-squeezed lemon juice (from 1 ½ to 2 lemons)
- 1 medium-to-large clove, not head, of garlic, roughly chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt or to taste
- ½ cup tahini, stirred well
- 2 to 4 tablespoons ice water
- 1-2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

#### **Preparation:**

Place the drained, rinsed, canned chickpeas in a medium saucepan and add the baking soda. Cover the chickpeas by several inches of water, then bring the mixture to a boil over high heat. Continue boiling, reducing heat if necessary to prevent overflow, for about 20 minutes, or until the chickpeas look bloated, their skins are falling off, and they're quite soft. In a fine-mesh strainer, drain the chickpeas and run cool water over them for about 30 seconds. Set aside (no need to peel the chickpeas for this recipe!)

1. Meanwhile, in a food processor or high-powered blender, combine the lemon juice, garlic, and salt. Process until the garlic is very finely chopped, then let the mixture rest so the garlic flavor can mellow, ideally 10 minutes or longer.

2. Add the tahini to the food processor and blend until the mixture is thick and creamy, stopping to scrape down any tahini stuck to the sides and bottom of the processor as necessary.
3. While running the food processor, drizzle in 2 tablespoons ice water. Scrape down the food processor, and blend until the mixture is ultra-smooth, pale, and creamy. (If your tahini was extra-thick to begin with, you might need to add 1 to 2 tablespoons more ice water.)
4. Add the drained, over-cooked chickpeas to the food processor. While blending, drizzle in the olive oil. Blend until the mixture is super smooth, scraping down the sides of the processor as necessary, about 2 minutes. Add more ice water by the tablespoon if necessary to achieve a super creamy texture.
5. Taste, and adjust as necessary. The basic recipe might need more salt or lemon juice. You be the boss and decide. Scrape the hummus into a serving bowl or platter and use a spoon to create nice swooshes on top. Top with garnishes (more olive oil, chopped parsley, a sprinkle of ground cumin, etc.) of your choice, and serve. Leftover hummus keeps well in the refrigerator for about a wee

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**Beet hummus:** Cook 2 medium beets. You can peel and boil, or poke and roast at 375 degrees for about an hour, or until you can easily slide a fork through the beet past the middle. No pushing! Let the beet cool, then take off the skin with a paring knife. Cut the beets into quarters and puree in a food processor. Add to the hummus. Stir and be dazzled. Especially pretty with steamed green beans, sugar snap peas, or broccoli.

**Carrot hummus:** Peel and cut two large carrots into one-inch chunks. Either microwave with a couple of tablespoons of water or steam on the stove until soft enough to be stabbed with a fork. Puree the carrot in a food processor and add to the hummus. Stir well. A teaspoon of harissa paste stirred in well adds a fine flavor to this orange beauty. If you use purple carrots, the hummus will be a purple color.

**Greens hummus:** Pick your greens: You can use 1 cup of greens, torn from tough stems (discard or save for broth) such as kale, chard, spinach, arugula, beet, or other edible plant greens) and ¼ cup of herbs (parsley, cilantro etc.). For the greens, cook as you normally would until soft. You can cook the herbs with the greens or leave them fresh, tearing the leaves away from the stems. Puree the greens and herbs in the food processor until smooth and add to hummus. Stir well and garnish with more chopped herbs.

**Avocado hummus**: Mash 1 ripe avocado. Add 1 teaspoon lemon juice,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup chopped cilantro, 2 tablespoons chopped onion, and hot sauce to taste (start with 1 teaspoon). Mix well, garnishing with more chopped cilantro.

**Roasted Red Bell Pepper Hummus**: Puree either one roasted bell pepper, skinned, and seeded, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  jar roasted red bell pepper, drained. To a food processor. Puree until smooth. Add to hummus. Garnish with smoked paprika or sweet paprika.