**Homemade Tahini Paste**

Serves: Makes just under ¾ cup

Ingredients

* 1 cup [hulled sesame seeds](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008OGCZPA?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creativeASIN=B008OGCZPA&linkCode=xm2&tag=thedargou09-20)
* 3 tablespoons or more extra virgin olive oil (see Note)

Instructions

1. Heat a clean, dry cast iron or heavy duty skillet over medium high heat and add the sesame seeds. Stir frequently until they begin to turn golden brown and then stir constantly. Be careful, sesame seeds burn very easily.
2. Once they're toasted, let them cool a few minutes then add them to a food processor.
3. Start by adding 3 tablespoons of olive oil. Process the mixture into a paste, scraping down the sides. Add more olive oil until you reach the desired consistency (\*see Note)
4. Makes a little less than ¾ cup tahini paste, depending on how much olive oil you use.
5. Store the tahini paste in the refrigerator in an airtight jar. Will keep for several months.

Tahini is a popular staple in Middle Eastern, Greek, and East Asian cooking.  Here are just a few ways tahini is used:

* Tahin Pekmez is a popular dip in Turkey.  It has the reputation as being the Turkish PBJ because it’s made with tahini (which has kind of a peanut-buttery taste) and grape molasses.  Sound like a winning combination?  It is!
* In Greece it’s a popular condiment in which to dip pita and souvlaki (grilled meat kabobs).
* In Israel it’s a staple topping for falafel and shwarma.  It’s also used to make halva-like treats.
* In East Asia in commonly used in noodle dishes.
* Throughout the Middle East it’s used in sauces for meats and vegetables.

**Creamy Hummus with Homemade Tahini Paste**

 Serves: 4-6

Ingredients

* 1 cup dried garbanzo beans/chickpeas, rinsed then soaked overnight
* ½ cup Homemade Tahini Paste
* ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
* 2-3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
* 1-2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
* ¼ teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
* ½ teaspoon salt
* Reserved cooking water from the garbanzo beans
* Extra olive oil, a sprinkle of paprika, and chopped fresh cilantro for garnish

Instructions

Drain and rinse the garbanzo beans. Place in a pot with water and bring to a boil. Add a teaspoon of baking soda if you're prone to gas. Reduce the heat to medium, cover, and cook for 1 to 1½ hours until the beans are very soft. Drain and let cool.

Place the garbanzo beans in a food processor until no large chunks remain. Add the tahini paste, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, cumin and salt and process until smooth. Add some of the reserved cooking water, a little at a time, as needed until the desired consistency is reached. Add salt to taste.

Transfer to a serving bowl and make some swirly divets on the top. Drizzle some olive oil over it, sprinkle with some paprika and chopped fresh parsley if desired. Serve with toasted pita wedges, vegetables or crackers.

Store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

**Tzatziki Sauce Recipe**

Tzatziki is a healthy sauce you can serve with chicken, grilled veggies, pita chips, gyros and as a raw veggie dip

Serving: 3 cups

Ingredients

* ½ English cucumber, peeled
* 16 oz (2 cups) Cold plain Greek yogurt (either full fat or fat free will work)
* 4 cloves garlic, pressed
* ⅓ cup chopped dill, fresh or frozen
* 1½ Tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice (Juice of ½ lemon; please squeeze a real lemon)
* ½ tsp salt, or to taste
* ⅛ tsp black pepper

Instructions

The Cucumber should be peeled, finely diced and strained of its juices. You can use a cheese cloth to squeeze out excess juice. Getting rid of excess juice is important so that you tzatziki sauce isn't watery the next day.

Combine the strained and chopped cucumber with yogurt, lemon juice, garlic cloves, chopped dill, salt and black pepper.

Mix everything together and add more salt to taste if needed. It's best to refrigerate for about 1 hour before serving to let the flavors meld. It tastes even better when refrigerated overnight.

**Gazpacho**

* 2 each cucumbers
* 2 each green peppers
* 2 each red peppers
* 2 each yellow peppers
* 1 each onion
* 1 each jalapenos
* 2 quarts diced plum tomatoes
* 3 each garlic cloves
* 4 ounce apple cider vinegar
* 2 cans (46 oz) tomato juice
* 1 tsp. cumin
* 1 ½ Tbls. Sugar
* Extra virgin olive oil
* Sour cream, eggplant croutons, and sliced green onion to garnish

Eggplant croutons

* Skin and large dice eggplant
* Salt and rest for ½ to 1 hour
* Sift in flour and deep fat fry to light golden
* Season
* Bake in oven at 300 F for 1 hour
* Better in low oven (150 F) 3 hours to overnight

**Tapenade**

* 1 ½ cups pitted black olives (you may use a mix of olives if desired)
* 2 oz can anchovy fillets, drained
* 1 Tbls. Capers
* 4 fl oz (1/2 cup) extra virgin olive oil
* Finely grated rind of 1 lemon
* 1 Tbls. Brandy (optional)
* Ground black pepper
* 2 Bunch Parsley Very Finely Minced

Directions

* Finely chop olives, anchovies, and capers, parsley
* Mix together with the oil, lemon rind, and brandy
* Season with pepper and blend in more oil if mixture is dry

**Empanadas dough (flour)**

* 7 oz all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
* 4 oz masa harina
* 3 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
* 1 teaspoons salt
* 4 oz lard, melted and cooled
* 6 fl oz cold water
* 2 large egg, lightly beaten with 1 tablespoon water (do not beat until ready to bake)

Blend dry ingredients, add lard mix by hand or slow speed on mixer

Blend 4 oz water and 1 egg gradually add dry mix. Knead the dough about 3 minutes. Whisk together the remaining egg and flour to make an egg wash. Cut out circles of dough fill ½ ounce filling on each circle, fold in half refrigerate until ready to fry the empanadas. Fry at 350 F

**El Relleno**

* 1 diced onion
* 4 garlic cloves mashed
* 2 tomatoes grilled
* 2 jalepenos finely diced

Place in a blender and process smooth, strain

* ½ cup olive oil
* 1 # course ground beef, chicken, pork
* 1 cup small diced carrots
* 1 cup small diced peeled potatoes
* 1 tbls achiote
* 1 Tbls black pepper
* 1 Tbls dry oregano
* 1 tsp ground cumin

Brown meat in olive oil add the carrots, potatoes and seasonings. Add the strained liquid let cook till smooth