

CHIRSHI (SEPHARDIC PUMPKIN AND SWEET POTATO SPREAD)

I first learned about this delicious appetizer from my friend, Israeli food journalist, Gil Hovav. It is a perfect vegetarian/vegan appetizer and also makes a great vegetable side dish. Leftovers can be made into soup (add stock or water) or pancakes (add eggs and some flour).

Serve it as is or sprinkled with pumpkin seeds, cilantro and/or pomegranate seeds. If you do not have these exact ingredients (eg instead of squash or sweet potatoes use other root vegetables like carrots and parsnips) or if you do not use some of these ingredients because of Passover restrictions, substitute what you can use (eg instead of hot sauce use a fresh jalapeno)

Serve with matzah or other crackers or vegetable sticks.

Ingredients

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil - divided
1 tbsp tomato paste or 1 tsp harissa or other hot sauce
1 tsp kosher salt
1 lb piece butternut squash, peeled and cut into 1 1/2" chunks
1 lb sweet potato(es), peeled and cut into 1 1/2" chunks
3 whole cloves garlic, peeled
1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
2 to 3 tbsp fresh lemon juice or to taste
1 clove garlic, grated or minced
1 tsp to 1 tbsp harissa or other hot sauce, optional
1/2 tsp paprika or smoked paprika
kosher salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. In a large bowl combine 2 tbsp olive oil with tomato paste and salt. Add squash, sweet potatoes and whole garlic cloves and toss well to coat. Arrange on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and roast in a preheated 400F oven for 40 to 50 minutes or until tender and a little browned. Cool. Place vegetables in a bowl and mash with

a potato masher or fork (if you like it slightly chunky like I do), or puree as coarsely or smooth as you like, in a food processor. You should have about 2 to 2 1/2 cups.

2. Mix in lemon juice, grated garlic, harissa or other hot sauce, paprika or smoked paprika and salt. Season to taste.

3. Spread on a platter and serve as is or sprinkle with ingredients mentioned in intro.

Makes approximately 2 to 1 ½ cups