



Sandy's Baba Ganoush

Fable

In olden days, a handsome Middle Eastern prince so loved baba ganoush that he vowed to marry the girl in his kingdom who could prepare it best. For many weeks the prince traveled from village to village, tasting baba ganoush prepared by eager maidens at every stop. Finally, he tasted a dish truly delightful in every respect. This baba ganoush was not only rich and smooth, fragrant and filling, and a perfect blend of eggplant, herbs, and spices; but also prepared by the hands of a girl of surpassing beauty, grace, and intelligence.

Declaring this maiden his bride-to-be, the prince set the date for the wedding, announcing to the world that in celebrating this glorious event, he desired neither gifts of gold and silver, frankincense and myrrh, nor silks and sandalwood. Rather, he sought the raw ingredients for his intended's delicious baba ganoush. From all across his kingdom and from neighboring kingdoms as far away as Bulgaria and Baluchistan, various caliphs, emirs, and sheiks dispatched caravans of the sturdiest camels and the stoutest donkeys, laden with bunches of herbs, jars of spices, baskets of eggplants, and amphoras of olive oil as gifts for the royal couple, filling the prince's storerooms to the rafters.

Thus, the couple wed and began their married life together in the greatest happiness, for the princess loved her lord and was determined to honor him with the delight of his life: her baba ganoush. In return, the prince loved his lady dearly, especially her baba ganoush.

The first night after the wedding fete, the princess prepared a huge dish of her delicious baba ganoush,

which the prince finished off in a trice, smacking his lips for more. Likewise, the second night, the third, and the fourth, the princess pleased her husband with heaping servings of her prized baba ganoush. On the fifth night, the prince detected that the baba ganoush was not up to its usual standard. Indeed, it tasted a little dry. With the greatest diplomacy, he intimated as much to his beloved. Yet on the sixth night, the fabled dish was even less satisfactory, though the prince forbore to admonish the light of his life as she seemed somewhat distraught.

On the seventh night, when the prince sat down for dinner, there was no baba ganoush! Wanting to approach the subject with absolute delicacy, the prince sweetly asked his wife, "Dearest, where is my baba ganoush?" With that, his beloved bride, the sunshine of his soul, threw herself at his feet, sobbing and moaning, tearing at her hair and rending her clothes. "My darling," gasped the prince, "what on earth can be the matter with you?" In response, his frantic bride wailed, "We're out of olive oil!"

Princess, we feel your pain!

While I would never attempt to compete with a princess in a fable, I have developed my own recipe for baba ganoush. In case you've never tried this dish, it's a very tasty dip that can be served with pita bread, your favorite crackers, bagel chips, or even flour tortillas, depending on which you prefer. In addition to the basic ingredients, I've listed some optional ingredients for you to experiment with to give this dish a more traditional Middle Eastern flavor.

Sandy's Baba Ganousch

Ingredients:

- 3 medium roasted eggplants
- 3-4 cloves roasted garlic
- 1/4 cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 1/4 cup plus 2 teaspoons Sandy Oaks Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Juice of 1/2 to 1 whole lemon, to taste
- Sea Salt and ground pepper to taste
- A couple of sprigs of fresh parsley or cilantro as garnish

Optional Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons cumin
- 3 tablespoons roasted sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 cup pine nuts



Preparation:

Step One:

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Prick eggplants with a fork and place them on a baking sheet.

Peel the loose layers of skin from a head of garlic, cut off the tops of the cloves, removing approximately 1/4 to 1/2 inch from the top.

Place the garlic on a piece of foil large enough to surround it.

Drizzle 2 teaspoons olive oil over the garlic, making sure it's well coated.

Wrap the foil around the garlic, making certain that it is completely covered.

Place garlic "package" and eggplants in oven.

Step Two:

Roast the garlic until it feels soft to the touch when pressed, which should take 30-35 minutes.

Remove garlic from oven and set aside to cool.

Roast the eggplants until they are charred and collapse. This should take at least 1 hour.

Remove eggplants from the oven and set aside to cool.

Step Three:

Once they have cooled, cut the eggplants in half lengthwise and scoop out the pulp, discarding any pockets of seed.

Place the pulp in your food processor.

Using a small knife, cut the skin around the individual garlic cloves, and then remove 3-4 cloves from the bunch.

Squeeze the individual cloves out of their skins and into the food processor containing the eggplant. Puree eggplant and garlic, gradually adding the rest of the ingredients to the mixture until you have a smooth, creamy paste.

Place in a bowl and refrigerate for 1-2 hours.

Remove from refrigerator and taste to see if additional salt, pepper, or lemon juice is needed.

Garnish with parsley or cilantro and serve with pita, crackers, or whatever you choose.