

Charred Salmon with Creamy Feta and Chickpea Salad

By Eric Akis

This Mediterranean-style dish sees grilled, lightly charred salmon fillets served on a tangy, creamy feta mixture and colorful chickpea salad. Serve the meal with warm wedges of pita bread to clean up any creamy feta left on the plate.

Creamy Feta

Ingredients

- 100 grams feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/2 cup thick plain yogurt
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and ground white pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Place feta in a bowl and mash with a fork until almost paste-like.
2. Add the yogurt, 1 tsp lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, 1 tsp olive oil, salt, and ground white pepper; vigorously mix to combine.
3. Cover and refrigerate until needed. (Can be made many hours in advance.)

Chickpea Salad

Ingredients

- 1 cup canned (or dried, soaked, cooked and cooled) chickpeas, drained well (see Note)
- 8 cherry tomatoes, each quartered
- 3/4 cup English cucumber, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- 2 to 3 Tbsp torn fresh mint or basil leaves, or to taste
- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Place chickpeas, tomatoes, cucumber, garlic, torn mint (or basil) leaves, 3 Tbsp olive oil,

- balsamic vinegar, and red pepper flakes in a bowl.
2. Season with salt and pepper, then toss to combine.
 3. Cover and refrigerate until needed. Toss again just before serving. (Can be made many hours in advance.)

Charred Salmon

Ingredients

- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for the grill
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- 2 (5- to 6-oz / 140- to 170-gram) sockeye or other salmon fillets
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 mint or basil sprigs, for garnish
- Lemon slices, for garnish

Instructions

1. **Preheat & Prep:** Preheat your barbecue or indoor grill to medium-high. Take out the chickpea salad and creamy feta to warm at room temperature while preparing the fish.
2. **Season Salmon:** Combine 2 tsp olive oil, oregano, paprika, and lemon zest in a shallow dish. Add the salmon fillets and turn to coat. Season each fillet with salt and pepper.
3. **Grill:** Lightly oil the bars of your grill. Place salmon fillets skin side up and grill for 3 to 4 minutes undisturbed. Flip when ready and cook 2 to 3 minutes on the skin side, or until just cooked through. Transfer salmon to a plate.
4. **Assemble:** Spread some of the creamy feta on each of two dinner plates, reaching out to the edges. Spoon some chickpea salad over the feta. Top with a grilled salmon fillet, garnish with mint or basil sprigs and lemon slices, and serve.

Note (Using Dried Chickpeas): Soak a scant 1/2 cup of dried chickpeas in cold water for 8 hours or overnight. Drain and place in a pot with 6 cups of cold water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a gentle simmer for 60 to 70 minutes until tender. Drain well and cool before using.

Eric's Options (Oven Baking): If you don't have a grill, coat and season the salmon, place on a parchment-lined baking sheet, and bake at 400°F (200°C) for 10 to 12 minutes or until cooked through.