

Creamy feta and chickpea salad set stage for this charred salmon

have bites that have smoky, grilled salmon, summer-fresh chickpea salad, and rich, tangy feta in them, and discover they all work together. Serve the meal with warm wedges of pita bread, to clean up any creamy feta left on the plate.

Charred Salmon with Creamy Feta and Chickpea Salad

This Mediterranean-style dish sees grilled, lightly charred salmon fillets served on a tangy, creamy feta mixture and colourful chickpea salad.

For the creamy feta

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

Place feta in a bowl and mash with a fork until almost paste-like. Add the yogurt, 1 tsp lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, 1 tsp olive oil, salt and ground white pepper and vigorously mix to combine. Cover and refrigerate the creamy feta until needed in the instructions below. It can be made many hours in advance.

For the chickpea salad

- 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

Place chickpeas, tomatoes, cucumber, garlic, torn mint (or basil) leaves, 3 Tbsp olive oil, vinegar and pepper flakes in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. Cover and refrigerate the salad until needed in the recipe below. It can be made many hours in advance. Toss again just before serving.

For the salmon

- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil, plus some 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

Preheat your barbecue or indoor grill to medium-high (see Eric's options). Take out the chickpea salad and creamy feta and let warm at room temperature while you finish preparing the fish.

Combine 2 tsp olive oil, oregano, paprika and lemon zest in a shallow dish. Add the salmon fillets and turn to coat. Now season each fillet with salt and pepper.

Lightly oil the bars of your grill. Set on the salmon fillets, skin side up. Grill three to four minutes undisturbed. The salmon should easily release

itself from the grill when ready to flip. Cook two to three minutes on the skin side, or until the fish is just cooked through. Transfer the salmon to a plate.

To serve, spread some of the creamy feta on each of two dinner plates, making sure it reaches out to the plate's edges. Spoon some of the chickpea salad on the creamy feta on each plate. Then, top the salad with a grilled salmon fillet, garnish with mint (or basil) sprigs and lemon slices, and serve.

Note: If you want to use dried chickpeas for the salad, set scant 1/2 cup of dried chickpeas in a bowl, cover them with a generous amount of cold water and soak eight hours, or overnight. Drain soaked chickpeas, then sear in a pot. Add six cups of fresh cold water, set pot over medium-high heat and bring chickpeas to a boil. Reduce heat until chickpeas gently simmer. Simmer chickpeas for 60 to 70 minutes, or until they are tender, but still nicely holding their shape. Drain chickpeas well, let them cool, and they are ready to use in the salad.

Eric's options: If you don't have a barbecue or indoor grill, you could bake the fish instead of grilling it. To do that, once the salmon is coated with the olive oil mixture and seasoned with salt and pepper, set it on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and bake in a 400 F oven for 10 to 12 minutes, or until cooked through.

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