

Herb jam

This is a Moroccan recipe, which I first learnt while working as an intern at Alice Waters' restaurant, Chez Panisse, in California. 'Herb jam' is Paula Wolfert's name for this delicious, savoury salad-cum-relish. The recipe here is based on one of hers.

The key to success is patience. You must wash vast quantities of greens and herbs, steam the greens, pound together the herbs and garlic, fry the olives and spices and then cook everything down together slowly in a wide pan until it resembles jam. It's a bit of a hassle, so I advise making a double batch (buy way more greens than you think it's possible to cook) and freezing some.

But when you taste it, perhaps on crostini or with warm Moroccan bread, you'll realise why this is such a special recipe. If you love greens, olives and lemony flavours, you'll adore this. Everyone I have cooked it for has found it a revelation.

For the greens, use a mix of whatever you can find – spinach, chard, rocket, kale, sorrel, watercress, mustard greens, celery leaves, purslane...

Makes: a large tub, which should serve 16 as part of a meze style meal

loads of greens – enough to fill an 8 litre bowl when chopped and packed down, if not more

cloves from 2 heads of garlic, peeled and roughly chopped

2 tsps coarse salt

4 small dried hot red chillies

2 mugs packed full of roughly chopped parsley

2 mugs packed full of roughly chopped coriander

250ml good olive oil

250g black or violet olives, halved and stoned

4 tsps Spanish paprika (smoked, if you like)

4 tsps ground cumin

juice of 4 large lemons

sliced preserved lemon or wedges of fresh lemon to garnish



1. Wash chopped greens well in a large vat of water. Lift out (leaving dirt to settle at bottom of vat) and pack into top half of a large steamer or couscouisière. Bring water in bottom half to a boil, place greens on top, cover and steam for 30 mins, turning leaves over occasionally. Spread greens over a tea towel-lined tray to cool and dry.
2. Use a large pestle and mortar to pound garlic, chilli, parsley and coriander to a paste. Use coarse salt as an abrasive to help break it down, and add herbs bit by bit once you've creamed the garlic and chilli.
3. In a large, wide pan heat a good slug of the oil and fry olives with spices for a few minutes over low-medium heat to release their flavours. Add garlic-herb paste and lemon juice and fry five or so minutes more, stirring. Add greens and remaining oil and continue cooking another 30 or so minutes, stirring frequently, until it resembles a thick sludge. Taste and add more lemon juice, olive oil or salt if needed. Serve at room temperature garnished with preserved lemon or wedges of fresh lemon to squeeze.