

VERY GOOD



Middle Eastern
salads + plates
for sharing

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+ Louisa Allan
of Very Good Falafel

SALADS

SPRING



SPRING

One

Bulgur wheat, saffron, broad bean and dill pilaf

Serves 4

100 g (3½ oz) shelled pistachios

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) broad (fava) beans

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

1 brown onion, sliced
big pinch of saffron threads

sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper

200 g (1 cup) coarse bulgur wheat

2 bay leaves (preferably fresh)

1 cinnamon stick

60 g (½ cup) fresh or frozen peas

2 tablespoons chopped parsley

2 tablespoons chopped mint leaves

2 tablespoons dill fronds

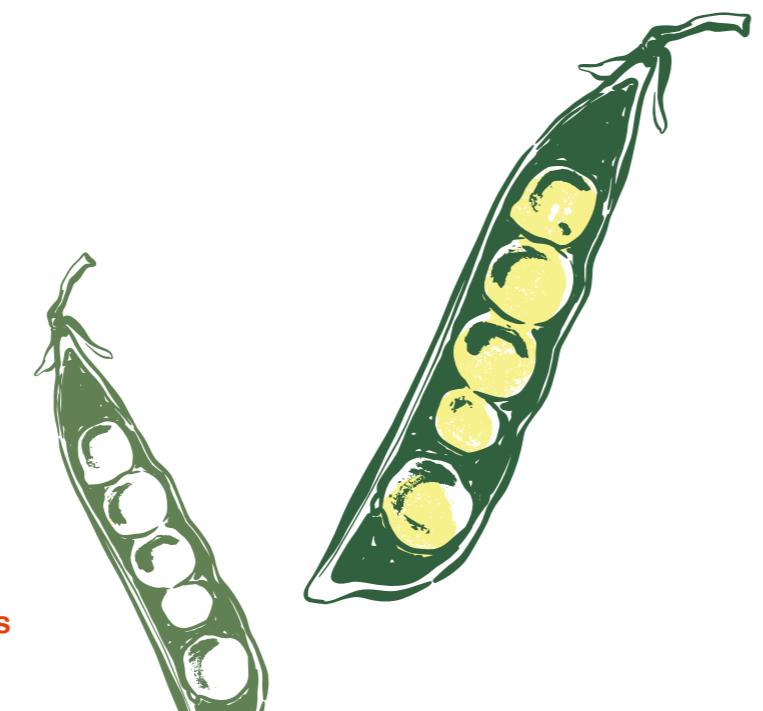
01 Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F) fan-forced. Spread the pistachios over a baking tray and bake for 8–10 minutes, until fragrant. Be careful not to overcook. Cool and chop the pistachios.

02 Pod the broad beans, then peel them again. This is easier if you give them a quick soak in hot water first.

03 Heat the olive oil in a large heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 10 minutes or until soft. Add the saffron threads and a big pinch of salt, give the mixture a stir and add the bulgur wheat. Pour enough water into the pan to cover the mixture by 5 cm (2 in), then add the bay leaves and cinnamon stick. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer, cover and cook for 15 minutes or until soft, checking halfway through to make sure the bulgur isn't drying out – add a little more water if necessary. Add the broad beans and peas in the last 5 minutes of cooking.

04 Remove the pan from the heat and check you're happy with the seasoning. Add the herbs just before serving and scatter over the pistachios to finish.

05 Serve warm.



Coarse bulgur wheat is one of our favourite grains to use at the shop, and this dish is one of our most popular ways to use it! Inspired by Persian pilafs with dill and broad beans, this is a real springtime treat.



Celery, radish, mint, broad beans, spring onion

Serves 4

400 g (14 oz) broad (fava) beans

½ bunch of celery, cut into 5 mm (¼ in) thick slices on the diagonal

5–6 radishes, cut into thin wedges

2 handfuls of mint leaves

4 spring onions (scallions), thinly sliced

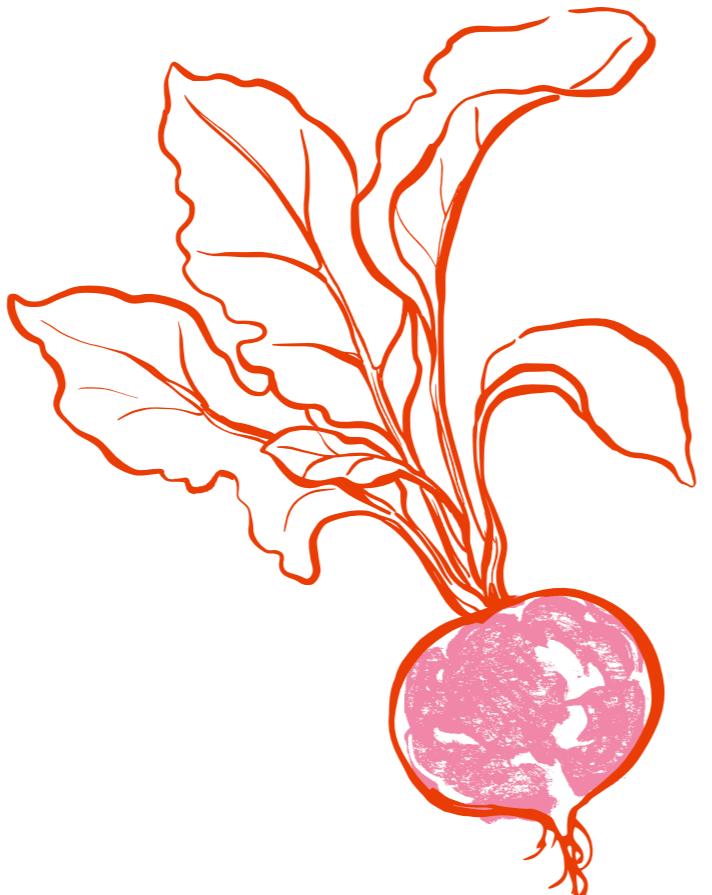
100 ml (3½ fl oz) extra virgin olive oil

juice of 1 lemon

sea salt flakes

This is what we want to eat every day in spring! Fresh, crunchy and colourful, with the broad beans reminding us of their short but sweet season.

- 01 Pod the broad beans, then peel them again. This is easier if you give them a quick soak in hot water first.
- 02 Place the double-podded beans, celery, radish, mint leaves and spring onion in a bowl. Drizzle over the olive oil and lemon juice, scatter with sea salt and toss gently to combine.
- 03 Serve immediately.



Green plum, celery, French lentils

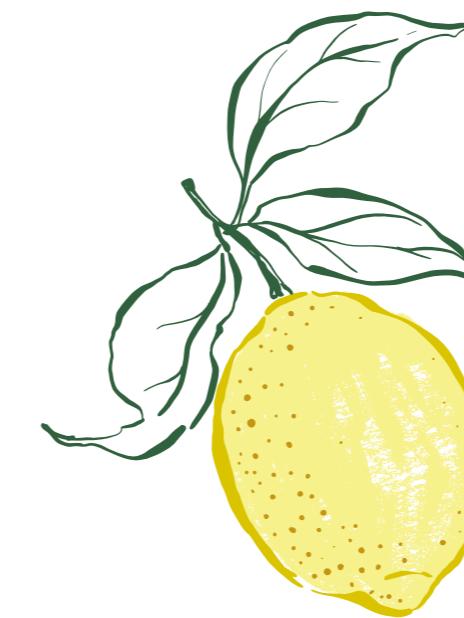
Serves 6



There are two groups of spring produce. First are the vegetables that grow only in springtime and must be eaten at their peak – artichokes, broad beans, asparagus, crunchy carrots, endless varieties of radish ... The second group is produce that won't be ready until summer but we can't bear to wait that long, so we pick them early and find ways to use them! This is the case when it comes to green almonds, which we harvest as soon as our eyes spot fruit on the tree. We slice them thinly and basically eat the shell with the almond inside in jelly form. The same is true for freekeh, which is basically wheat that didn't get a chance to dry in the sun and is instead harvested fresh and placed over fire to make it possible to separate the grain from the pod. The result is a grain that tastes light with a hint of smoky flavour. Then there's garlic that's often pulled from the ground before it gets a chance to divide into cloves; the young bulbs soft and aromatic.

This recipe doesn't contain any of these ingredients – we are here for the plums. Of course ripe plums have their place on the kitchen table, but green plums should be up there too, with their lovely sourness that balances the earthiness of lentils and neutral flavour of celery in this salad.

When we pick green plums from my own tree, I normally take the ones at the top that the birds are eyeing up, or any with funny marks. If you don't happen to have a plum tree, you can find green plums at farmers' markets and Turkish and Middle Eastern grocers.



500 g (2½ cups)
French (puy) lentils
300 g (10½ oz) green
plums, stoned and
diced
6 celery stalks, diced
1 red onion, diced
125 ml (½ cup) extra
virgin olive oil
juice of 2 lemons
sea salt flakes



- 01 Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil over high heat. Add the lentils, then reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for about 20 minutes or until the lentils are just tender. Drain and allow to cool to room temperature.
- 02 Place the lentils, plum, celery and onion in a bowl. Drizzle over the olive oil and lemon juice and season with salt, to taste. Toss well to combine and serve straight away.
- 03 Any leftovers will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for 2–3 days.

SUMMER



Two

SUMMER

Cucumber, dates, pistachio

The combination of how easy this salad is to make and how tasty it is, drives us to put it on the table. It's just how we like it when it's hot. An easy and yummy salad that no one's gonna say no to!

Serves 4

70 g (½ cup) shelled pistachios

3 short cucumbers

6 Medjool dates, pitted, each date sliced into 6 strips

½ red onion, diced
handful of chives, chopped

finely grated zest of ½ lemon, plus a little juice

sea salt flakes

extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling

- 01 Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F) fan-forced. Spread the pistachios over a baking tray and bake for 8–10 minutes, until fragrant. Take care not to overcook. Cool and chop the pistachios.
- 02 Cut the cucumbers in half lengthways and scrape out the seeds with a teaspoon. Cut into 5 mm (¼ in) thick half moons. Combine the cucumber, date, onion, chives, lemon zest and pistachios in a bowl. Dress with a little squeeze of lemon juice, a pinch of salt and a drizzle of olive oil, and serve.



Zucchini, harissa, black olives, mint

The idea of steamed zucchini probably doesn't sound that exciting, but the magic of harissa prevails once again here! It's such a magical spice, taking any and every vegetable to great heights, even steamed zucchini.

Serves 4

3 zucchini (courgettes),
cut into 1.5 cm (½ in)
pieces

sea salt flakes and
freshly ground
black pepper

2 tablespoons
chopped parsley

2 tablespoons
chopped mint leaves

handful of pitted
kalamata olives, halved

- 01 Steam the zucchini over a saucepan of boiling water for 5–10 minutes, until very soft.
- 02 Meanwhile, whisk the dressing ingredients together in a small bowl. While still warm, dress the zucchini, mixing very well so the zucchini is completely coated. Taste for seasoning and set aside for 10 minutes. When the zucchini has cooled a little, add the herbs and olives, then serve straight away.

Harissa dressing

2 tablespoons Harissa
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2 tablespoons extra
virgin olive oil

juice of 1 lemon



Peaches, basil, hazelnuts

Nothing could be more simple and summery than this salad! It's quick to make with just a few ingredients, but the peach juices, basil and hazelnuts together are just magic! A favourite at Very Good Falafel since the start, Shuki likes this salad with firm, less-ripe peaches but Louisa likes her peaches ripe and sweet.

Serves 4

70 g (½ cup) hazelnuts

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) white or yellow peaches, as ripe as you like
bunch of basil, leaves picked

100 ml (3½ fl oz)
extra virgin olive oil, or to taste

juice of 1 lemon, or to taste

sea salt flakes

- 01 Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F) fan-forced.
- 02 Spread the hazelnuts over a baking tray and bake for 15 minutes or until fragrant and the skins begin to loosen. Allow to cool slightly, then rub the hazelnuts between your hands or in a clean tea towel to rub off most of the skins. Crush or roughly chop the hazelnuts.
- 03 Wash the peaches well, then remove the stones and slice each peach into wedges. Transfer to a large bowl, along with the hazelnuts. Add the basil leaves, plenty of olive oil, lemon juice and salt, to taste, then toss to combine and serve.

