

Roman pizza with baba ganoush and prawns

Baba ganoush is the famous Middle Eastern preparation made from eggplant (aubergine), sesame paste (tahini), garlic and olive oil. I make it regularly to spread on crusty bread with countless other things on top. In this case it's being served with prawns (shrimp), but it would go just as well with scallops, octopus or lamb shoulder.

INGREDIENTS

1 sheet of Roman-style pizza dough
(see pages 84–88)
350 g (12 oz/1¹/₃ cups) tinned San Marzano whole peeled tomatoes
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt
32 medium prawns (shrimp), shelled
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

BABA GANOUSH

3 large eggplants (aubergines)
2 tablespoons tahini
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 garlic cloves
Sea salt
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

METHOD

FOR THE BABA GANOUSH / Place each eggplant over a gas flame, turning until the skin is evenly charred and the flesh is soft all the way to the centre. Remove and place on a plate to cool for 10–15 minutes. Cut the eggplants in half, top to bottom, scoop out the flesh and place in a colander to drain for 15–20 minutes. Place the eggplant in a food processor with the tahini, lemon juice, garlic and salt and process until smooth. Add extra tahini, lemon juice or salt to taste. Spoon into a bowl and add the olive oil so it covers the top. Sprinkle the smoked paprika and parsley over. Any left-over baba ganoush can be refrigerated for 3–4 days.

TO ASSEMBLE / Preheat the oven to 220°C (425°F). Hand squeeze the tomatoes until they're uniformly mashed and mix in a tablespoon of olive oil and a pinch of salt. Spread the tomato mixture on top of the sheet of pizza as evenly as possible. If the dough has risen excessively, press down gently with the tips of your fingers to make small indentations to trap the tomato. Bake in the oven for 25 minutes. If the teglia is browning more on one side, your oven is not even and the tray may need to be turned. While the teglia is cooking, heat the remaining olive oil in a pan. When it begins to smoke, add half the prawns and fry until just cooked. Remove the cooked prawns and place on a plate, seasoning with salt. Fry the remaining prawns the same way. Reserve any cooking juices. Once the teglia is cooked, remove from the oven and let cool a little. Place on a serving plate as a large piece or cut, using scissors, into individual

tiles. Spoon baba ganoush over the surface, then place the prawns on top. Scatter with the parsley and finish by sprinkling the prawn cooking juices over the lot.

Serves 6–8

Roman-Style Pizza Dough Basic

Roman-style pizza is a rectangular, focaccia-like pizza that is famous in Rome. It is light, full of large bubbles and can be filled or topped with many ingredients. Roman-style pizza does not require a wood-fired oven, but traditionally is cooked in a 'deck' oven at almost half the temperature of wood-fired pizza. Use stoneground whole-wheat (not wholemeal) flour.

INGREDIENTS

1 kg (2 lb 4 oz/6²/₃ cups) unbleached, stoneground whole-wheat flour or strong bread flour
3.5 g (¹/₈ oz) dried (powdered) yeast or 125 g (4½ oz) Sourdough starter
(see page 79)
650 ml (23 fl oz) water at room temperature
½ teaspoon caster (superfine) sugar
25 ml (1 fl oz) extra virgin olive oil
20 g (³/₄ oz) sea salt

METHOD

Place the flour in a mixer with a dough hook attachment.

Dissolve the yeast in 100 ml (3½ fl oz) of the water (or if using the sourdough starter, remove 50 ml (1¾ fl oz) of water from the recipe and simply add the starter) and add to the flour along with 400 ml (14 fl oz) of the remaining water and the caster sugar.

Turn on the mixer to its lowest setting and mix for about 2 minutes until the water is totally absorbed. Add the oil and salt and mix in. Double the speed of the mixer and slowly add the remaining water, a little at a time, only adding more when the previous amount has been absorbed. The mixture will look quite wet, but don't worry, continue mixing for 8–10 minutes and you'll see that gradually the dough will begin to stretch and form long gluten strands.

Rest the dough for 10 minutes in the mixer bowl, covered with plastic wrap, before folding, leaving to mature in the refrigerator and forming into three sheets (teglie) of Roman-style pizza dough (see pages 86–88).

Makes 3 teglie (550 g/1 lb 4 oz sheets)