

LabnehV

This Middle Eastern yoghurt-cheese is delicious. It’s really easy, but you do need to plan ahead to have it ready for when you want it. Once your balls of labneh are ready, you can roll them in our Dukkha (page 225) to go on an antipasto board or to accompany a salad or any other dish where you might use a soft cheese.

Makes	16-20 balls	Per serve (1 x 35 g ball, with 1 tsp olive oil)
Prep time	10 minutes	Carbs 2.5 g
Cook time	1-2 days	Protein 1.6 g
Difficulty	●●●	Fat 7.6 g
		Energy 79 Cal

INGREDIENTS

2 cups full-fat natural unsweetened yoghurt
½ tsp salt
¼–½ tsp ground cumin (optional)

For storing and marinating:
olive oil as needed
1 clove garlic
1 bay leaf
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp black peppercorns
zest and juice of 1 lemon

METHOD

Line a large bowl with a clean tea towel. Stir the salt and the cumin (if using) through the yoghurt, then pour the yoghurt into the towel. Gather the ends of the towel together and tie them firmly with a long piece of string (or a twisted piece of cling wrap). Wrap the towel around the middle of a long wooden spoon and secure with the ends of the string so that when you lay the spoon across the top of the bowl the yoghurt will hang clear of the bottom.

Place in the fridge for 24 hours, occasionally tipping out the liquid (whey) that collects in the bottom of the bowl, to keep the hanging yoghurt clear of it. The whey can be used as a starter for pickles like sauerkraut (to speed the process up and improve the pickle). Check the thickened hung yoghurt in the cloth – if it is thick enough to ball, then you are ready for the next stage. If not, transfer it to a fresh tea towel and hang the same way for another day. The dry cloth will draw out more moisture and the extra day should ensure that your labneh is suitably thick.

Once you have achieved a goat’s-cheese-like thickness, carefully form the labneh into little balls, each weighing about 35 g (about the size of a golf ball). Place the balls in a sterilized jar and top the jar up with olive oil. Add the garlic, bay leaf, cumin seeds, peppercorns, and lemon zest and juice – the lemon juice acidifies the oil to help stop any nasty bacteria growing.

Store the jar in the fridge for up to 1 month. When you want to use the labneh, simply fish some out with a spoon.

