

Herb-and-Pistachio Couscous

Start to finish: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

Couscous may be fast and convenient to prepare, but it's also pretty dull. We found a way to up the flavor by undercooking—technically underhydrating—the couscous by preparing it with less water than typically called for. We then combine the couscous with a flavorful paste made from oil and pureed fresh herbs. The “thirsty” couscous absorbs tons of flavor as it finishes hydrating. Inspired by a recipe from Yotam Ottolenghi, we piled on the herbs—2 cups each of cilantro and flat-leaf parsley—plus another 2 cups of arugula. We also added currants as we doused the couscous with boiling water, giving them time to plump. Jalapeños brought a spicy kick; we used pickled peppers, which have more consistent heat and contributed welcome piquancy. Toasted pistachios and thinly sliced scallions added a finishing crunch. The couscous pairs well with most any meat, though it is particularly good with salmon.

Don't use pearl couscous (also known as Israeli couscous or ptitim). The larger “grains” won't hydrate sufficiently in this recipe and also cook up with a different appearance and texture.

—Sara Sietz

1 cup couscous
3 tablespoons dried currants (or any dried fruit, finely chopped)
½ teaspoon ground cumin
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
¾ cup boiling water
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more to serve
2 cups lightly packed cilantro (if you don't like cilantro, you can replace it with any other leafy green herb, such as basil or dill)
2 cups lightly packed flat-leaf parsley
2 tablespoons finely chopped drained pickled jalapeños, plus 2 teaspoons brine
2 cups lightly packed baby arugula, roughly chopped
½ cup shelled pistachios, toasted and chopped (or any nut or seed)
2 scallions, thinly sliced

In a large bowl, combine the couscous, currants, cumin and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Stir in the boiling water and 1 tablespoon of the oil, then cover and let stand for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a food processor, combine the cilantro, parsley, the remaining 5 tablespoons oil, the jalapeño brine and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Process until a smooth paste forms, about 1 minute, scraping down the bowl 2 or 3 times.

Fluff the couscous with a fork, breaking up any large clumps, then stir in the herb paste until thoroughly combined. Fold in the jalapeños, arugula, pistachios and scallions, then let stand for 10 minutes. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve at room temperature, drizzled with additional oil.

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with the Milk Street Cooking School

Shopping List

1 cup couscous (be sure to get small couscous, NOT "Pearl" Couscous)
3 tablespoons dried currants OR golden raisins OR chopped dried apricots OR dates,
finely chopped
½teaspoon ground cumin
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1-2 bunches fresh cilantro (if you don't like cilantro, you can use any other leafy green
herb instead; basil, dill or additional parsley are all good)
1-2 bunches fresh parsley
1 jar pickled jalapeños
About 2 cups lightly packed baby arugula
About ½ cup shelled pistachios, toasted (or any other nut or seed)
1 bunch scallions

Prep Recommendations

All you need to do to prepare for this class is gather your ingredients and put a kettle or a pot of water on to boil. If your pistachios are not already toasted, toast them in a small skillet, toaster oven or oven until faintly golden brown and aromatic.

If you'd like to practice using your herb paste to make an herbed yogurt, you will also want to have about **1 cup of plain yogurt** on hand. To try using the herb paste to make an herby salad dressing, have some **additional olive oil** and a splash of **vinegar or citrus juice** on hand.