

Eggplant Relish With Atraf At-tib – Medieval Arabic Spice Mix

Ingredients:

Difficulty: Easy

(serves 6)

For atraf at-tib (spice mix):

1 tsp dried lavender (in Helsinki, you can find this in Ruohonjuuri)
1 bay leaf
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
1 tsp ground cardamom
2 whole cloves
1 tsp ground ginger
1/2 tbsp black peppercorns

For the eggplant relish:

1 eggplant, about 400 gr., peeled as seen in the photo
1 + 1/2 tsp salt, divided (the first one is for soaking the eggplant, the second is for cooking it)
3 garlic cloves
3 tbsp roasted sesame oil
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tbsp roasted sesame seeds
1/2 tbsp atraf at-tib
200 gr. thick plain yogurt (Turkish or Greek)

If you want to make an open sandwich:

a few slices of your favourite bread (I bought fresh, whole wheat baguette for this)

Instructions:

1. Cut the eggplant in small cubes. Put in a bowl / container and cover with water. Put 1 tsp salt, mix it (just mix with your hand or a spoon). Let it sit for 20 minutes. This will remove the bitter taste of eggplants.
2. While eggplant is in the water, prepare the spice mix. Put all the ingredients for atraf at-tib and grind and mix them using a mortar and pestle. Now this takes tons of time so if you have a spice mill, then use that!! I definitely decided to buy one after my left arm gained extra muscle from doing this spice mix.. When the mix is ready, put aside.
3. Mince garlic cloves.
4. Drain the eggplant cubes and pat them dry with paper towel (doesn't have to be too dry, just get the excess water as much as possible). In a slightly big pan, warm sesame oil in medium heat for about a minute. Add minced garlic and eggplant cubes. Cook them all by constantly stirring with a wooden spoon.

5. Once the garlic-eggplant mixture is cooked, add cumin, coriander, 1/2 tsp salt and roughly half of sesame seeds. Continue cooking for a little more again by stirring constantly, until you are sure all the spices are well mixed with eggplants.
6. Put cooked eggplant in a container large enough to do some more mixing. If you are planning to make an open sandwich, then do NOT wash the pan yet. Add roughly half of atraf-at-tib and yogurt and mix well.
7. (at this point I put the mixture in another bowl, just for fun...) Before serving, sprinkle the rest of sesame seeds and atraf at-tib on top of the relish.
8. To make a toast / open sandwich: toast bread slices in a toaster first a little. Then transfer them to the unwashed pan, put the pan on medium heat, (you may want to press on the bread slices with your hand), let at least one side of each slice to get the remaining aromatic sesame oil on the pan. Top with the relish (the relish will taste much better if you let it cool for about half an hour).