

## MEDITERRANEAN MEDLEY

### Essential Mediterranean Ingredients

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#### Tahini

Tahini is a potent paste made from toasted sesame seeds; it's similar in texture to natural peanut butter. Apart from being a core ingredient in hummus, tahini is often thinned with water or lemon juice and drizzled over falafel, kebabs, pilaf, and roasted or raw vegetables in Middle Eastern recipes. Our favorite supermarket tahini is **Ziyad Tahini Sesame Paste**. It has a strong, clean tahini flavor.



#### Yogurt

Yogurt is integral to many a Mediterranean dish—from Greek tzatziki sauce to Turkish yogurt soups. The word yogurt comes from the Turkish word for “condense.” To make a basic yogurt, milk is heated and then cooled to just over 100 degrees before a bacteria culture is added. After 4 to 8 hours, the mixture thickens into yogurt. In the Mediterranean, yogurt is often made with sheep's milk, which has a high fat content and makes for a rich, creamy yogurt. In the United States, you're more likely to find yogurt made from cow's (or, sometimes, goat's) milk.

Greek-style yogurt is thicker and creamier than standard yogurt because most of its whey, the watery liquid found in yogurt, is strained out during production. Additionally, it's tangier and has more than twice the fat of regular yogurt. It works well in applications where a velvety, substantial texture is desirable, such as the yogurt sauce in today's show.

Labneh, or yogurt cheese, is the thickest form of strained yogurt. It's often served as part of a meze spread and can be used plain, drizzled with olive oil, or flavored simply with herbs.

#### Couscous

Couscous is a starch made from durum semolina, the high-protein wheat flour that is also used to make Italian pasta. However, while pasta is made with ground durum semolina that is mixed with water to form a dough, traditional Moroccan couscous is made by rubbing crushed durum semolina and water between the hands to form small granules. The couscous is then dried and, traditionally, cooked over a simmering stew in a steamer called a couscoussier. About the size of bread crumbs, the couscous found in most supermarkets is a precooked version that needs only a few minutes of steeping in hot liquid in order to be fully cooked. Pearl couscous, also known as Israeli couscous, is larger than traditional couscous (about the size of a caper) and, like Italian pasta, is made from durum semolina flour. However, it is toasted, rather than dried, which gives it its unique, nutty flavor.



*Couscous*



*Pearl Couscous*

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### DIY Pita Chips

#### Olive Oil-Sea Salt Pita Chips

##### SERVES 8

Both white and whole-wheat pita breads will work well here. We prefer the larger crystal size of sea salt or kosher salt; if using table salt, reduce the amount of salt by half.



- 4 (8-inch) pita breads**
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt**

**1.** Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Using kitchen shears, cut around perimeter of each pita and separate into 2 thin rounds.

**2.** Working with 1 round at a time, brush rough side generously with oil and sprinkle with salt. Stack rounds on top of one another, rough side up, as you go. Using chef's knife, cut pita stack into 8 wedges. Spread wedges, rough side up and in single layer, on 2 rimmed baking sheets.

**3.** Bake until wedges are golden brown and crisp, about 15 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Let cool before serving. Pita chips can be stored at room temperature for up to 3 days.

### Preparing Pita for Chips



**1.** Using kitchen shears or scissors, cut around perimeter of each pita to yield 2 thin rounds.



**2.** Brush rough sides of each round with oil, season with salt, and stack them. Using chef's knife, cut stack into 8 wedges.