

## FLAVORS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN BOWL WITH CREAMY BASIL SAUCE

Susan Denzer

Chef | Cooking Instructor | Recipe Developer | Food Writer

Love + Craft Kitchen, LLC

[www.loveandcraftkitchen.com](http://www.loveandcraftkitchen.com)

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KITCHEN



Treat yourself to an imaginative get-away with this tasty, versatile, energy-boosting Mediterranean bowl with a bright, herby, creamy sauce.

Frozen diced sweet potatoes or spiralized sweet potatoes may be used in place of fresh sweet potatoes. (Roast as directed, beginning to check for doneness after 10 minutes.) Cooked chicken or tofu can be added in addition to or in place of the chickpeas.

Makes: 2 bowls

### INGREDIENTS

2/3 cup cooked whole-wheat couscous, quinoa, brown rice, or cauliflower rice

2 ounces mixed super greens or spinach

1 small sweet potato, washed, diced OR spiralized sweet potatoes

2 1/2 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

2/3 cup canned chickpeas, rinsed and drained thoroughly

1/2 teaspoon Za'atar seasoning or any Mediterranean herb blend

1/2 avocado, sliced

1/4 red onion, thinly sliced

1/2 small cucumber, diced

1/2 red bell pepper, thinly sliced

1/2 cup sliced Kalamata olives

1/3 - 1/2 cup crumbled feta or crumbled goat cheese

sesame seeds or sliced almonds - for garnish

pickled veggies - optional

Creamy Basil Sauce - recipe follows

### DIRECTIONS

1. **Prepare the Creamy Basil Sauce** as directed in the following recipe and allow the flavors to blend for at least 30 minutes.

#### 2. **Roast the sweet potatoes**

- Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with foil, parchment paper, or a silicone mat. Spray lightly with cooking spray.
- Spread the sweet potatoes out on the baking sheet, drizzle 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil over the top and toss to coat. Sprinkle the salt and pepper over top.
- Place baking sheet into the hot oven and roast for approximately 15 - 18 minutes, until potatoes are soft when poked, lightly browned, yet hold their shape.
- Remove from the oven and allow to cool.

### 3. Prepare the Chickpeas

- Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat in a medium-sized skillet. Add the chickpeas, and stir to coat. Sprinkle the Za'atar seasoning (or Mediterranean herb blend) over the top and gently stir to evenly distribute.
- Lower the heat to medium-low and allow the spice blend to infuse for about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove the pan from the heat and allow to cool slightly.

### 4. Assemble the Bowls

Divide and arrange the ingredients in each bowl:

- whole grain
- greens
- sweet potato
- avocado
- red onion
- cucumber
- bell pepper
- Kalamata olives
- seasoned chickpeas (or cooked chicken or tofu if using)

### 5. Add the Sauce

Drizzle the desired amount of Creamy Basil Sauce over the top, and garnish with cheese, sesame seeds or almonds, and (optional) pickled veggies. Serve immediately.

### Creamy Basil Sauce

Lively and herbaceous, this sauce has become a favorite at my house. It is wonderful as a dressing for bowls and salads but also makes a nice dipping sauce for roasted or grilled veggies, meats, or seafood. An immersion or hand blender works well for this recipe. If not available, use a full-sized blender, scraping down the sides often and blending longer to fully incorporate the ingredients.

Makes: approximately 3/4 cup sauce

#### INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup packed basil leaves, washed, patted dry  
1/2 cup plain Greek or plant-based yogurt (or 1/4 cup yogurt + 1/4 cup mayonnaise)  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 tablespoon chopped shallot or sweet onion  
1 1/2 teaspoons white balsamic vinegar or champagne vinegar  
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic  
1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt  
pinch of ground black pepper

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Place all ingredients into a blending cup or deep bowl. Using an immersion or hand blender, process until smooth, light green in color, and fully emulsified. Stop occasionally to scrape down sides and bottom of the cup or bowl.
2. Transfer sauce to a covered storage container. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving, or up to 1 day ahead. The dressing will last up to 2 weeks when tightly covered and refrigerated.