

News

Page Six

Sports

Entertainment

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Jonathan Baskin

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Cool meals for hot nights

Step away from the stove! No-cook dishes taste great, with little effort. By CARLA SPARTOS

A meal to beat the desert heat

Late last year, chef-owner Rawia Bishara moved her acclaimed Brooklyn restaurant, Tanoreen, to a beautiful new space down the block (7523 Third Ave., Bay Ridge; 718-748-5600). While her recipes are firmly rooted in Middle Eastern home cooking, you'll find Italian and Greek influences, as well. Eaten with some olives, pickles, hummus and pita, the dishes below could easily satisfy a small party fueled by arak — an anise-flavored spirit that turns cloudy when water and ice are added.

Mahamara

This pepper and walnut spread originated in Syria, and will keep in the fridge all week. You can find pomegranate molasses at Whole Foods or at specialty stores like Kalustyan's (123 Lexington Ave.; 212-685-3451).

- 4 medium red bell peppers, seeded and chopped into 2-inch pieces
- ½ Spanish onion, chopped into 2-inch pieces
- 2 cups raw walnuts, chopped, plus more for garnish
- 1/3 cup pomegranate molasses
- 2/3 cup unseasoned breadcrumbs
- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. ground cumin seed
- 1 tsp. ground allspice
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. ground coriander seed
- salt and pepper, to taste

Blend peppers and onions in a food processor until they are ground to a smooth

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consistency, straining and reserving any liquid. Set aside. Pulse the walnuts in the same processor until they are coarsely chopped (not big pieces, but not a paste). In a bowl, fold the bell pepper, onion, walnuts, pomegranate molasses, breadcrumbs, oil and spices together until thoroughly mixed, adding some of the reserved liquid if necessary to achieve desired consistency. Refrigerate for half an hour to cool, and garnish with a drizzle of the molasses and some walnut halves. Serve with soft pita or toasted pita chips and fresh vegetables.
SERVES FOUR TO SIX.

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