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Cumin Naan with Grilled Tomato Chutney

Makes 4 to 8 servings (4 breads)

Naan, the yeasted flatbreads of central Asia, are traditionally baked in wood-fired tandoors, large vertical ceramic ovens that get superhot – hot enough to sear the surface of bread in seconds. Although home cooks try to duplicate the effects of a tandoor by lining the floor of a conventional oven with ceramic tiles, the heat is never the same. We think a grill gives more authentic results, especially a charcoal grill. Like all flatbreads, the dough for naan is relatively easy to prepare. It takes about 10 minutes to mix up and 1-1/2 hours for rising. If you need to leave the dough for a few hours (or as long as a day), you can let it rise in the refrigerator. It will taste even better.

INGREDIENTS:

1 teaspoon active dry yeast
3/4 cup warm water (110 to 115°F)
1/2 cup plain yogurt
1-1/2 teaspoons ground toasted cumin seeds (see Know-How, below)
1-1/2 cups bread flour
1 tablespoon canola oil
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon sea salt
About 1 cup whole-wheat flour
2 teaspoons unsalted butter, softened
2 teaspoons cracked toasted cumin seed
1-1/4 cups Grilled Tomato Chutney (see below)

DIRECTIONS:

Mix together the yeast and 1/4 cup of the warm water in a large bowl until the yeast is dissolved.

Mix together the yogurt, cumin, and remaining 1/2 cup water in a medium bowl and add to the yeast mixture, stirring until well blended. Add the bread flour and stir vigorously for 2 minutes. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and set aside at room temperature until bubbly, about 30 minutes.

Stir in the oil, sugar and salt and enough of the whole-wheat flour to make a kneadable dough. Knead on a clean work surface, using additional flour to keep the dough from sticking, until the dough is smooth and elastic, between 5 and 10 minutes.

Wash out the large bowl and coat it lightly with oil. Turn the dough in the oiled bowl to coat with the oil. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour. While the dough is rising, prepare the chutney.

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Light a grill for direct medium-high heat, about 425°F.

Divide the dough into four pieces. Roll each into a ball and flatten into a 1/2-inch-thick disk. Cover with a kitchen towel and let rest for 5 minutes. Lightly flour a clean work surface and roll each disk of dough into an oval about 9 inches long and 1/4 inch thick. Coat each bread with oil and stack on a plate to transport to the grill.

Brush the grill grate and coat with oil. Put the dough on the grill so the disks are evenly spaced, cover, and cook until grill-marked and charred in spots on the bottom and puffed on top, about 2 minutes. Turn with tongs and cook on the other side until browned and spotted with char, about 1 minute. Remove to a plate, brush with butter, and sprinkle with the cracked cumin. Serve with the chutney.

KNOW-HOW: TOASTING AND CRACKING WHOLE SPICES

You will need to toast about 2 tablespoons cumin seeds to prepare the ground toasted cumin and cracked cumin for the bread and chutney. Toast the seeds (or any whole spice) by heating a small, heavy skillet (such as cast-iron) until very hot. Add the seeds, remove from the heat, and stir until the seeds are aromatic and lightly colored, about 1 minute. You can use the same heavy pan (after it has cooled down) to crack or crush the seeds by carefully pounding them on a solid flat surface (like a butcher block) with the bottom of the pan.

Grilled Tomato Chutney

Best with lamb, beef, chicken, turkey, game meats, cheese.
Makes about 1-14 cups.

2 garlic cloves
Two 1/4-inch-thick slices fresh ginger
1/2 medium onion, thickly sliced
2 teaspoons canola oil
1 large tomato (about 12 ounces)
2 jalapeño chiles
1/2 teaspoon ground toasted cumin seeds
1/2 teaspoons coarse salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

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Light a grill for direct medium-high heat, about 400°F. Soak two or three bamboo skewers in water for at least 30 minutes. Thread the garlic cloves, ginger slices, and onion slices on the skewers and coat with a thin film of oil. Brush the grill grate and coat with oil.

Grill the skewers until the vegetables are lightly charred on all sides, about 5 minutes total.

At the same time, place the tomato and jalapeño chiles over the fire and char on all sides, turning every 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the stems, and discard the chile seeds if you want the chutney to be milder.

Chop the garlic, ginger, onion, tomatoes, and chiles finely and combine with the cumin, salt, black pepper, cilantro, and mint. Store in the refrigerator in a tightly closed container for up to 2 weeks.