



## Spring for Lemons

**A**lthough the cooler months are considered citrus season (surprised?), I tend to use lemons more frequently in the warmer months — lemonade, berry and lemon tarts, freshly squeezed lemon on grilled fish, just to name a few uses. So, I dedicate May's column to three dishes that feature the lemon.

### Hummus

- 2 - 16 ounce cans chick peas
- 5 cloves garlic
- 4 tablespoons tahini
- Juice of 3 lemons
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 7 dashes Tabasco sauce
- Sea salt to taste
- Fresh ground pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a food processor and blend until coarsely puréed. You may add more olive oil and/or lemon juice to achieve a smoother texture. You may also adjust the quantity of Tabasco sauce depending on your desired level of heat.

Serve the hummus chilled or at room temperature, using it as a dip for crusty bread, radishes, or endive leaves.

### Chicken Tagine with Lemons

- Two tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- Chicken thighs (about two pieces per person)
- Sea salt to taste
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- 1 half onion
- 1 teaspoon Turmeric
- Handful of black Greek, Spanish or Italian olives
- 6 to 8 fresh dates
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Juice of 2 lemons

A "tagine" is the name of the dish as well as the pot in which it is cooked. This Moroccan slow cooker has a conical cover that permits condensation to drip down to the ingredients in the base. I use our Le Creuset tagine with a cast iron base as it allows me to simmer directly on the stove. A 1-3/4 quart tagine is ideal to serve two to four. A larger group will require a larger tagine or a cast iron pot.

Place the oil and garlic in the tagine and sauté for several minutes until the garlic is softened. Add the chicken as well as all other ingredients except for the olives and lemon zest. The small amount of lemon juice will create enough liquid to braise the chicken as the condensation will circulate in the vessel. Turn the heat on medium high and cook until the liquid begins to boil. Then cover the tagine and turn the heat to a low simmer.

Periodically turn the chicken pieces to ensure that they are coated with the sauce. When the chicken is cooked, add the olives and lemon zest and simmer for a few more minutes. The ideal way to serve this tagine is to spoon it over couscous — I prefer Israeli.



### Lemon Squares

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 6 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup pecans (quality pecans from Georgia are the key!)

Mix the butter, flour and powdered sugar together until well combined. Press into a 10 by 14 inch pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 15 minutes. Beat the eggs slightly, and add sugar, lemon juice and baking powder. Blend the mixture and pour on top of the baked pastry. Then sprinkle the pecans on the egg mixture and put back in the oven for 40 to 50 minutes. Cool, sprinkle with additional powdered sugar and cut into squares.

Happy juicing and zesting! 🍋



**Susan E. Poppiti** is a mathematics teacher at Padua Academy High School and managing member and cooking instructor for La Cucina di Poppiti, LLC and can be reached at [spoppiti@hotmail.com](mailto:spoppiti@hotmail.com). Other recipes and cooking tips are available on Susan's new food blog at [www.cucinadipopppiti.com](http://www.cucinadipopppiti.com).