

Crispy, fluffy air-fried falafel perfect for New Year's resolutions



Air Fryer Falafel

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

We love falafel, but since most falafel is fried in oil, we have rarely eaten it ... until now! That's where the magic of the air fryer comes in. It's a game changer in my opinion, because it doesn't need all of that extra oil to make the falafel crispy. We are so happy, because the garbanzo beans, fresh herbs, garlic, shallots, cumin and all of those great flavors are so hard to resist and they are healthy, too. While you can certainly bake falafel in the oven, the air fryer produces a crispier outside and a soft and fluffy inside to the falafel. Now we eat it way more often. Plus all of the great breads and sauces to eat

with falafel are amazing, like naan or pita, whipped feta, tzatziki, Greek olives ... I could go on. Those Mediterranean flavors pretty much make my taste buds flutter!

This recipe calls for a lot of fresh parsley and cilantro, which gives it a super fresh taste and a beautiful green tint on the inside, and seltzer water added to the mixture provides an extra bit of crispiness on the edges. Where most recipes call for using soaked and ground raw garbanzo beans (chick-peas), this recipe uses canned beans, but we roast them to dry them out a bit before processing them with the rest of the ingredients. This speeds up the process and tastes really deli-

cious. And, finally, we add just a bit of baking powder to the mixture, which also helps to keep the inside light and fluffy.

If you would like to make whipped feta to go with your falafel, simply beat 1 cup of crumbled feta and 1-2 table-

spoons extra-virgin olive oil together until the cheese is mostly creamy. Then whip in about a half cup of plain nonfat yogurt and one tablespoon fresh lemon juice until fluffy. That's it. So simple and sooooo good!

Air Fryer Falafel

(Makes 10 2-inch falafel balls)

INGREDIENTS

2 16-ounce cans garbanzo beans, rinsed, drained, and roasted
1/2 cup (packed) fresh parsley leaves
1/2 cup (packed) fresh cilantro leaves
2 small shallots, coarsely chopped (or 1 large shallot)
2 large cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon flour (can use regular all-purpose or any gluten-free flour)
2 +/- tablespoons seltzer water

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray.

Drain garbanzo beans and rinse them in cold water. Drain water off and spread them out on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for about 10-15 minutes or just until dried and starting to brown. Remove from oven and cool.

Place garbanzo beans, parsley, cilantro, shallots, garlic, lemon juice, cumin, salt, pepper and baking powder into the bowl of your food processor. Pulse until evenly mixed and small, fine pieces of garbanzo remain and mixture sticks together when you press it together. You don't want it too finely pureed, but just enough to hold together.

Turn the mixture out into a bowl and mix in flour and seltzer water. Now, the mixture should be able to hold its shape when formed into balls. Add more seltzer if needed for it to be able to form balls. Divide batter into 10 balls, approximately 2-inches in diameter.

At this point, you can freeze the falafel in an airtight container, or refrigerate for several hours until you're ready to bake them in the air fryer.

To cook, preheat the air fryer on the "air fry" mode to 350 F. When it says to add food, place the falafel balls on the tray and air fry for about 12 minutes or until the edges are crispy and the centers are hot.

Serve hot with pita or naan, whipped feta, hummus, tzatziki or even on a Greek salad.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

Family Focus

Frustrations and guilt with extended family relationships, Part One

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

"Family is supposed to be our safe haven. Very often, it's the place where we find the deepest heartache." ~ Iyanla Vanzant

Happy New Year! I wish you all good health, happiness, and a dearth of difficult relatives.

Both in my therapy practice and in my friendships, I see many people struggling in their relationships with difficult family members. On the one hand, we receive messages such as "Family is everything" and "Blood is thicker than water." On the other hand, since we don't pick our family members, how is it always possible to be close or even to get along?

Because we're instructed at an early age to love and respect family, those who view a family member differently can feel bad or wrong. They often suffer from guilt, sadness, and lowered self-esteem for being unable to match the expectations of family and society.

When we have feelings of guilt, we need to examine whether or not there is a basis for this. Did we do or say anything wrong or hurtful? Are we responsible for a ruptured relationship? All too often, the other party is the responsible one and doesn't feel guilty at all. If we have made good efforts and asked for what we would like from the other person, clearly and positively, but have not received cooperation, it is time for us to purge feelings of guilt. There may be sadness of course, because we all wish for healthy

family relationships. But it is unfair to blame or criticize yourself if you have actually done what you can.

One client, Kara, is an example of someone who took on guilt unnecessarily. Growing up, Kara had two younger sisters and got along well with them. Kara worked hard in school and has had a highly successful career. She is happily married with a young son. Her younger sister, Paige, followed a different path. Although single, Paige chose not to work full-time, saying she preferred having more time and a good quality of life. All well and good, except that she became jealous of Kara's affluence and family status.

Starting in their 30s, Paige began making snide comments about Kara to other family members. Eventually, Kara heard about this and asked Paige to tell her directly what was wrong instead of gossiping about her. Paige denied anything was wrong but continued to badmouth Kara to others. After this, Kara didn't trust Paige and wanted to have nothing to do with her, but she didn't want to cause drama and upset their parents and other family members. She felt guilty about disliking her own sister since she was raised to value family.

In our work together we looked at ways that Kara could take care of herself while not disrupting the rest of her family. If she had free choice Kara would have cut off contact with her sister. She realized she wouldn't miss a person who would willingly stab her in the

back. Kara understood that her guilt about not liking Paige was an inappropriate feeling. After all, she wouldn't continue to like a friend or neighbor who treated her this way either.

For the sake of family harmony, Kara decided she would participate as usual in family gatherings and avoid being alone with Paige. She would enjoy everyone else and not let her sister have the power to alter her behavior with other people she loved and trusted. Once Kara decided on her course of action, she felt much more in control – and less susceptible to Paige's dysfunctional behavior. Her guilt subsided as she found a way to accommodate her family despite her antipathy towards her sister.

The onset of COVID has impacted many family relationships due to differences of opinion on vaccinations, mask-wearing, and general precautions. Combined with those who had difficulties pre-COVID, it's almost becoming an exception where all members of one's extended family are loving and harmonious.

Pre-COVID, Marianne, a mother of two children ages 12 and 15, made the decision to end contact with her husband's father, Frank. Frank had a problem with alcohol and became mean and belligerent when he drank too much, which unfortunately was a frequent occurrence. He refused to admit to or address the problem in any way, and Marianne didn't want to continue exposing her children to him.

Marianne's husband, Rob, didn't agree with her, and they came in for therapy to try to preserve their relationship in the face of this divisive issue. The two families used to spend many holidays and occasional weekends together. Rob's parents were divorced, and his father lived with his second wife, Rob's stepmother.

Rob tried for years to deal with this problem. Since his father refused to drink less or get evaluated medically, Rob decided his family could visit him less and for shorter amounts of time. But he wanted his children to be able to know their grandfather and vice-versa, and he thought they were old enough to be able to understand that their grandfather was an alcoholic. Rob was hoping his kids could realize that alcoholism was a disease and forgive their grandfather. He said he also thought it might serve as a deterrent for them to ever drink heavily when they saw how damaging it could be.

We worked on reaching a compromise. COVID entered the picture, and whether or not to stay with Rob's father was no longer an issue. Rob could visit his father alone and outside during this time. When vaccinations became available and the kids were more protected, Rob could take them occasionally to meet his father for a meal during the day and outside. The hope was that Rob's father would not be as inebriated earlier in the day (and not driving if he was), and therefore would be less belligerent and

better company. Marianne could choose whether or not to accompany her family.

Marianne and Rob had done all the right things. They spoke up for what they wanted from his father and why. Then, when his father refused to cooperate, they implemented consequences. This situation is another instance where we can't control others' behavior but we can control our own. We need to keep searching for solutions for dealing with the difficult family members in our lives. And once we have decided on an approach, it is important to keep reminding ourselves that we have not been the driving force. We are only making necessary adaptations to others' dysfunctional behavior.

In the next column we will examine why some people remain stuck and continue to tolerate inconsiderate and disrespectful behavior from a family member.



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Holiday treat delivered to seniors



Photos provided

LCVI Client, Ernie (left) and LCVI volunteer Dianne

Submitted by Richard Grange

Volunteers from the Lions Center for the Visually Impaired (LCVI) brightened

the lives of 80 blind and visually impaired seniors, including two from Lafayette and Orinda, on Dec. 7 by hand delivering to them a freshly cooked, holiday meal with roast turkey and ham and a bag full of hand-crafted goodies. The seniors, who are blind and visually impaired clients of LCVI and many of whom spend a lot of their time at home, appreciated the special holiday gift. The project was organized by LCVI board of directors (president Charles "Duke" Dunham), to provide a "special, warm holiday meal delivered with joyful kindness."

As they dished out plates for the clients, Bill Ridle, LCVI board member and his wife Darlene, head chefs for the event, commented, "It's great to be able to help our clients with this holiday meal. We enjoyed cooking the food and were able to prepare special dishes for those with dietary needs."

Organized as a way to bring smiles during the ongoing pandemic, this project was led by the LCVI board and volunteers, who expanded the program from 29 meals in 2020 to 84 meals in



Volunteers prepare gift items for the blind and visually impaired senior clients of the Lions Center for the Visually Impaired.

2021. After assembling the gift bags and labeling for delivery, a crew of about 20 volunteers hand delivered the meals to the homes of the clients across the county, providing a welcome treat.

LCVI client Ernie of Concord expressed his gratitude, "Thank you to the volunteers, for their time and special effort to make and deliver the meal and gifts. It was very gratifying to me." Fel-

low LCVI client Sam of Clayton added, "It was pretty good! They delivered right to my house. I especially enjoyed the au gratin potatoes, so creamy and cheesy."

For more information about the free services for blind and visually impaired seniors, call the Lions Center for the Visually Impaired/LCVI at 925-432-3013 or visit www.LCVI.org.