

Charoset

As Passover approaches, we begin to look at how the traditional recipes fit into the AH lifestyle. While replicating a better version of Matzah is not within my ability, I have worked with other Passover staples to bring you delicious versions that better fit our lifestyle. One of my favorite parts of Passover, and usually the most sugar-laden, is the Charoset, a spicy, nutty mixture of fresh or dried fruits, nuts, spices and honey. Over the years, I developed Charoset recipes that use fewer sweeteners, yet still deliver the sweetness of this essential dish. If you don't celebrate Passover, these are also fantastic dessert options for any occasion, especially when you desire a flavor-packed little morsel that satisfies after only a few bites. The Sephardic Charoset turns into spicy dried fruit truffles that can round out any meal. In addition, the Apple Charoset can be served as is, or used as a Chutney, a topping for Greek Yogurt, a base for Phase 3 Homemade Granola (ALWAYS HUNGRY Book Pg 229) or as the fruit for either of the crisp toppings (AH Book pp. 285- 287). Regardless of how you celebrate, these recipes are sure to please.

Charoset: Makes about 10 to 12 servings

3 pounds apples*, grated or diced (about 9 medium to large apples)
1 cup walnuts, chopped
½ cup raisins

2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¾ cup Riesling or late harvest Muscat Wine
1 small lemon, juiced (about 1 to 2 tablespoons)

Add all ingredients, except lemon, to a pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer about 10 minutes, stirring regularly until apples begin to lightly soften and alcohol evaporates from the wine. Next, remove from heat, place in a large bowl, and toss with lemon juice. Then set aside for an hour to allow flavors to develop. Finally, serve and enjoy!

*Choosing a combination of sweet apples, such as fuji, and tart apples, such as Granny Smith, will create the best flavor in the final dish. Apples like Granny Smith grate well and also hold together well when cooked. As a result, the final dish will look a bit more fresh and pleasing. In contrast, avoid apples like MacIntosh that dissolve when cooked.

Sephardic Charoset: Makes about 12 servings

10 Medjool or other dates, pitted
¼ cup raisins
2 tablespoons Riesling or late harvest Muscat Wine
2 teaspoons honey
¾ cup slivered almonds
1 teaspoons cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
Zest of one orange or two tangerines
3 to 4 tablespoons almond flour

First, purée dates in food processor to form a thick paste. Next, place raisins and wine in a pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 5 minutes until the wine absorbs into raisins and alcohol is released. Add this mixture to the dates in the food processor along with almonds, spices and zest. Process, scraping the sides of the bowl or breaking up the ball that may form until almonds are coarsely chopped and completely incorporated into the mixture. Then remove from processor and transfer to a mixing bowl. Next, form the mixture into 1-inch balls and roll in your palms until smooth, using about 1 tablespoon each. Finally, roll the balls in almond flour until completely coated. This will result in bite-sized servings that are easy to handle. However, if you prefer a more spreadable version, serve the paste as is without rolling into a ball. Store, covered, at room temperature until ready to serve.

Variations: Substitute pistachios or other nuts in place of almonds. Use ½ dates and ½ dried apricots or other dried fruit of your choice. Get creative with spices to create different flavor profiles