

Acili Ezme (Spicy Tomato and Pepper Salsa)

Turkish · Appetizer · Easy · 20 min total · Serves 4

Acili ezme is a fresh, hand-chopped relish of tomato, pepper, onion and parsley, sharpened with pomegranate molasses and sumac. Eat it on bread as a meze, kept chunky and never blended.

Ingredients

- 3 medium ripe tomatoes (firm-ripe Roma or vine; seeded and finely diced)
- 0.5 medium yellow onion (finely minced; rinse under cold water and squeeze dry to mellow the bite)
- 1 small green bell pepper (finely minced)
- 1 small fresh red chili (Fresno or serrano, finely minced; keep the seeds in for heat)
- 1 clove garlic (minced)
- 0.5 bunch flat-leaf parsley (finely chopped)
- 1 tbsp pomegranate molasses (nar eksisi; or 1 tbsp lemon juice plus a pinch of sugar)
- 1 tsp ground sumac (adds lemony tang)
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil (good quality, for finishing)
- 1 tsp pul biber (Aleppo or Urfa; or red pepper flakes mixed with a little paprika)
- 0.5 tsp fine sea salt (adjust to taste)

Method

1. Core the tomatoes, scoop out the seeds with a teaspoon, and dice the flesh finely, about 1/4 inch (6 mm). Put them in a bowl so their juices stay with the salad.
2. Mince the onion, rinse it under cold water for a minute, and squeeze it dry in your hands.
3. Mince the green pepper, chili, garlic and parsley by hand. Do not use a blender or food processor, because the texture should be chunky and fresh, not a purée.
4. Add the onion, pepper, chili, garlic and parsley to the tomatoes and toss to combine.
5. Stir in the pomegranate molasses, sumac, pul biber, salt and olive oil, and toss gently so the tomatoes keep their shape.
6. Rest for 15 minutes, then taste. Add more molasses for sourness or salt for depth, and drain any liquid that has pooled at the bottom of the bowl before serving.
7. Serve at room temperature with warm bread or crisp lettuce leaves.

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