

# Chickpea-Couscous Salad with Lemon and Fresh Mint

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The salad holds in the refrigerator for about 4 days. Serve it with sliced tomatoes and spoonfuls of whole milk yogurt if you'd like.

Cook to Cook: Traditionally, couscous is initially steamed, lightly rubbed between your palms to separate any clumps, and steamed again. You get wonderfully fluffy, individual beads of wheat that would make a Moroccan cook proud. But when it is 106°F outside and you're at the end of a 12-hour day, I say, "Get thee to the microwave."



Traditionalists may cringe, but the fastest way I know to get couscous ready for its close up is in the microwave. Usually one part couscous (I prefer whole wheat for its flavors and nutrients) to two parts water, cooked on high for 2 to 3 minutes and rested for several moments, does the job.

## Ingredients

- Juice of one large lemon
- 1/2 medium red onion, cut in 1/4-inch dice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 3/4 cup whole-wheat couscous
- 1-1/2 cups warm water
- 1 small, sweet bell pepper, cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 1 stalk celery, cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 1/4 cup chopped pitted Kalamata olives
- 1/4 cup raisins
- One 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 to 1/3 tightly-packed cup fresh mint leaves, torn
- More lemon if needed

## Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine the lemon juice, onion, garlic, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and let stand while you pull together the rest of the dish.
2. In a microwave-proof glass bowl, combine the couscous, water, and the remaining salt and pepper. Microwave, covered, on high for 2 minutes. Carefully check couscous for tenderness (be careful because it will be steaming and hot). If needed, give it another 30 seconds to 1 minute. You want it slightly firmer than usual because it will finish cooking as it sits.
3. Add the red pepper to the onion mixture along with the celery, olives and raisins. Toss everything with the chickpeas and couscous. Taste for lemon and salt and pepper. Serve the salad cool or at room temperature, but not stone cold.
4. Encore: A few nights later there was a fusion moment and we turned leftovers into unorthodox spring rolls. Dampen and soften Vietnamese rice paper rounds by moistening them with warm water. Then streak the lower center of the rounds with hoisin sauce or sriracha hot sauce. Pile on shreds of lettuce, shredded raw carrot and the couscous-chickpea salad, and roll up.
5. Make a Vietnamese dipping sauce by mixing to taste lime juice or rice vinegar, sugar, garlic, fish sauce and water. It's amazing how many spring rolls you can get from a cup or so of leftover salad.