

## Muhammara

(red pepper, walnut and pomegranate molasses dip)

I have been taking this colorful dip to parties for a couple of years now, any time I can find jarred roasted peppers at a good price. It's from Paula Wolfert's 1994 "Cooking of the Eastern

Mediterranean" and makes a large amount.

It's outstanding served with fresh pita bread, but you can also try it with crisped pita or meat or fish kebabs. Be sure to serve it at room temperature. I usually double the amount of pomegranate molasses, and I've used whole wheat bread when I was out of wheat crackers. -- JW

*Makes about 3 cups*

2½	lbs	sweet red bell peppers*
1	small	hot chile pepper or 1 Tbs Turkish red pepper paste
1½	C	walnuts
½	C	wheat crackers or zweibach
1	Tbs	lemon juice
2	Tbs	pomegranate molasses, or more to taste
½	tsp	ground cumin, more for garnish
		Salt to taste
½	tsp	sugar
2	Tbs	olive oil, more for garnish

Roast the peppers and chile over a gas burner or under a broiler, turning frequently until blackened and blistered all over, about 12 minutes. Place in a covered bowl to steam for 10 minutes. Rub off the skins, slit peppers open, and remove stems, membranes and seeds. Spread the peppers, smooth side up, on a paper towel and let drain for 10 minutes.

In a food processor, grind the walnuts and crackers with the lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, cumin, salt and sugar until smooth. Add the bell peppers and process until pureed and creamy.

With the machine on, add the olive oil in a thin stream. Add the chile to taste. If the paste is too thick, thin with 1 to 2 tablespoons of water. Refrigerate overnight.

To serve, let the dip come to room temperature and sprinkle with cumin and olive oil.

*\*Canned red bell peppers can be substituted; drain well; toss stray seeds and bits of blackened skin, if needed.*