Poplar Creek Public Library District's

SPICE CLUB

HARISSA RECIPES

September 2026

I love gnocchi. These chewy, portly little dumplings have saved me on many a lazy evening when I've arrived home knackered and hungry, in need of something comforting, filling and quick. In this recipe, the spicy, buttery harissa coats the gnocchi and soaks into the broccoli florets, bringing a fiery kick to this easy midweek meal.

Harissa is easy to get in most decent-sized supermarkets: you should find it somewhere near the dried herbs and spices, with the other cooking pastes, spice mixes and sauces. And don't worry that you'll be buying a whole jar only to use a couple of tablespoons: you can use more of the paste in the harissa, spinach and ricotta cannelloni with toasted hazelnuts recipe in this cookbook and it's also great in tagines, with pasta, in soups or rubbed over the skin of a chicken before you roast it.

In this recipe, pan-frying gives a crispier finish to the gnocchi and a buttery, caramelised layer underneath, but roasting is ideal if you just want a more hands-off approach. Roasting is also handy if you want to scale up the quantities, as even a two-person serving tends to fill a frying pan. With that in mind, I've written two versions of the recipe: one using the sheet pan method and one for the stove top.

Recipe and excerpt from the following cookbook

COOK AS YOU ARE: RECIPES FOR REAL LIFE, HUNGRY COOKS, AND MESSY KITCHENS

by Ruby Tandoh

Call #: 641.5 Tan

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GNOCCHI WITH HARISSA BUTTER AND BROCCOLI

Makes 2 Servings

¼ cup walnuts, roughly chopped

Salt, to taste

1 small broccoli head

17.6 oz (or 1.1 lb) gnocchi

2 tbsp salted or unsalted butter

2 tbsp harissa, or to taste

THE STOVE-TOP METHOD:

1. First, toast the nuts in a large frying pan over a medium-low heat, stirring regularly. After a few minutes, they should begin to smell lightly toasted and nutty. Remove from the heat and transfer to a little bowl.

2. Bring a pan of salted water to the boil. While the water heats, prepare the broccoli: break the head into medium florets then trim and peel the stalk before cutting it into ¼-inch rounds. Add the broccoli and gnocchi to the now-boiling water, reduce the heat slightly and simmer for 2 minutes. Drain well, letting the gnocchi and veg steam dry in whatever you've used to drain them for a couple of minutes (this will help them caramelise in the pan).

3. Melt the butter in your frying pan over a medium-high heat then add the harissa and let it sizzle for a few seconds until your mouth begins to water. Add the gnocchi and broccoli to the pan, placing the florets bushy side down if you can – this will help them wick up all that butter and spice. Cook for about 2 minutes, resisting the urge to stir – leaving everything in place will help it all to caramelise and brown. Give it a stir, then turn the heat down and cook for 4–5 minutes more, stirring occasionally. Season to taste, then scatter over the toasted walnuts when you dish it out.

THE SHEET PAN METHOD:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and get out an appropriate-sized sheet pan (an 8x6 inch pan will be big enough for a 2-person serving).

2. Toast the nuts in the sheet pan for 5–8 minutes, until fragrant. Use your eyes (and/or nose) to monitor how deeply they've toasted: if they burn, they'll be really bitter. Once they're ready, remove from the oven, tip into a little bowl and set to one side.

3. Boil a full kettle. Tip the gnocchi into a large heatproof bowl and pour over the boiling water. Leave the gnocchi to sit for 2 minutes, then drain. To prepare the broccoli, break the head into medium florets. Trim and peel the stalk, then slice into ¼-inch rounds.

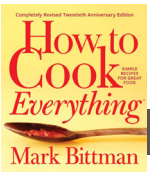
4. Chuck the butter in the sheet pan and melt in the oven for a couple of minutes. Stir in the harissa, then tip in the gnocchi and broccoli. Season with a little salt, mix everything well and roast for 25 minutes. Scatter over the toasted walnuts when you serve it.

VARIATIONS AND SUBSTITUTIONS:

If you don't have walnuts, almonds also work well for adding crunch, as do pine nuts or egusi. They can also be left out entirely. You can use sweet potato or cauliflower gnocchi in place of the potato gnocchi if you fancy a change: you can get them in some larger supermarkets, usually in the chilled aisles. Gluten-free gnocchi can also be found in larger supermarkets. At a pinch, you can swap the harissa for two tablespoons red pesto and a pinch of chilli flakes or powder. It'll be a very different dish, but still a quick and easy weeknight gnocchi idea. You can use olive oil or a vegan butter in place of the butter here – it won't be quite as rich as the butter, but it'll still help the gnocchi crisp and caramelise.

The difference between this soup and Simplest Dal comes down to consistency. This includes more vegetables and is a little thinner but still creamy and it's endlessly versatile. Use any type of lentil you like.

Recipe and excerpt from the following cookbook



HOW TO COOK EVERYTHING– COMPLETELY REVISED TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

by Mark Bittman

Call #: 641.5 Bit

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This is also available as an eBook.

LENTIL SOUP WITH HARISSA

Makes 4 Servings

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 carrot, chopped

1 celery stalk, chopped

1 cup dried lentils, rinsed and picked over

1 or 2 tablespoons harissa

1 bay leaf

6 cups vegetable stock or water

Salt and pepper

1. Put the oil in a large pot over medium heat. When it's hot, add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until soft, just a minute or 2. Add the carrot and celery; cook and stir until they're brightly colored and hot, about 2 minutes.

2. Add the lentils, bay leaf, and stock, and sprinkle with pepper. Bring to a boil, then turn the heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the lentils are tender, about 30 minutes. Add a tablespoon or two of harissa with the lentils and stock. (At this point, you can cool and refrigerate the soup, covered, for up to 2 days; reheat gently.) Add more liquid if the soup is too thick. Just before serving, sprinkle with salt; taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve right away.

Recipe from the following cookbook

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING EASY MEAL PREP: THE ULTIMATE PLAYBOOK FOR MAKE-AHEAD MEALS

by Good Housekeeping

Call #: 641.555 Eas

Available for checkout from the Poplar Creek Public Library District.

SHEET-PAN CHICKPEA CHICKEN

Makes 4 Servings

1 cup quick-cooking bulgur

¼ cup harissa

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons honey

1¼ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, thinly sliced

1 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed

¾ cup finely chopped fresh parsley

½ teaspoon salt

1. Prepare bulgur per package directions. In large bowl, whisk harissa with oil and honey; set half aside for serving.
2. Heat grill to medium-high. Toss sliced chicken breasts in remaining harissa mixture, then thread onto skewers. Grill 6 minutes or until cooked through, turning over once.
3. Toss chickpeas with bulgur, parsley and salt. Serve chicken on top with reserved harissa sauce.

Did You Know?

- Harissa comes from North Africa, specifically Tunisia
- Harissa can be very spicy, please use with caution
- Harissa is made with dried chiles and other spices
- Harissa is a spice blend that can be used as a condiment, in a sauce, as a dry rub or as a paste
- Harissa can be made into a paste by mixing 2 tablespoons of harissa seasoning with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, 1 tablespoon of lemon juice and 1 teaspoon of tomato paste, stir well and add a splash of water if it is too thick

Sources:
The Spice & Herb Bible by Ian Hemphill - 641.3383 Hem

The Science of Spice by Dr. Stuart Farrimond - 641.3383 Far

Spice: flavors of the Eastern Mediterranean by Ana Sortun - 641.6383 Sor

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