

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Resting Time: 15 minutes (optional, for flavors to meld)
- Total Time: 15 minutes
- Course: Salad, Side Dish, Main Course
- Cuisine: Mediterranean
- Servings: 6 large portions
- Intensity Level: Easy (Beginner-friendly knife skills required)

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Ingredients

For the Salad Base

- 2 cans (15 oz each) chickpeas (garbanzo beans): Rinsed and drained thoroughly. (Pro tip: Pat them dry with a clean kitchen towel if you want them to absorb dressing even more efficiently.)
- 1 large English cucumber: Diced into bite-sized half-moons. English cucumbers are preferred for their thin skin and minimal seeds.
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes or grape tomatoes: Halved or quartered. They provide a juicy sweetness that balances the salty elements.
- 1 medium red onion: Finely diced. To take the sharp edge off raw red onion, soak the diced pieces in cold water for 10 minutes, then drain thoroughly before adding.
- 1 cup kalamata olives: Pitted and roughly chopped. These bring an authentic briny depth.
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese: High-quality sheep's milk feta provides the best creamy, tangy flavor profile.

- 1/2 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley: Finely chopped. Fresh herbs are non-negotiable here for that bright, herbaceous finish.
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves: Chopped (optional, but highly recommended for a refreshing aromatic twist).

For the Zesty Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette

- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil: Use a robust, high-quality cold-pressed oil since it forms the backbone of the dressing.
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice: Freshly squeezed is essential; bottled lemon juice lacks the bright acidity needed.
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar: Adds an extra layer of tangy complexity.
- 2 cloves garlic: Minced or pressed through a garlic press.
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano: Rub it between your palms before adding to release its essential oils.
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt: Or to taste, keeping in mind that feta and olives add natural sodium.
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper: For a mild, warming kick.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Prep and Drain the Chickpeas

Begin by opening your cans of chickpeas. Pour them into a fine-mesh colander and rinse thoroughly under cold running water until the foaming subsides. Shake off as much excess water as possible. Transfer the rinsed chickpeas to a large mixing bowl.

Step 2: Chop the Vegetables

While your chickpeas drain completely, prepare your fresh produce. Dice your English cucumber into uniform half-inch pieces so every spoonful has a consistent texture. Halve your cherry tomatoes, finely dice the red onion, and chop your kalamata olives. Ensure all pieces are relatively uniform in size for the best eating experience.

Step 3: Combine the Salad Components

Add the diced cucumber, halved cherry tomatoes, red onion, kalamata olives, and fresh herbs (parsley and mint) directly into the large bowl with the chickpeas. Gently toss the ingredients together with a large spoon or spatula to distribute everything evenly without bruising the tomatoes.

Step 4: Whisk the Dressing

In a small glass jar or measuring cup, combine the extra virgin olive oil, fresh lemon juice, red wine vinegar, minced garlic, dried oregano, kosher salt, and black pepper. Secure the lid tightly on the jar and shake vigorously for 20 to 30 seconds until the mixture emulsifies into a smooth, cohesive vinaigrette.

Step 5: Dress and Toss

Pour the freshly whisked lemon-herb vinaigrette evenly over the chickpea and vegetable mixture. Toss gently to ensure every single bean and vegetable piece is lightly coated in the

bright, tangy dressing.

Step 6: Add the Feta and Rest

Gently fold in three-quarters of the crumbled feta cheese, reserving the rest to sprinkle on top right before serving for a beautiful visual presentation. For the ultimate flavor development, let the salad rest at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes. This allows the chickpeas to absorb the lemon and garlic infusion.

Step 7: Serve and Enjoy

Transfer the salad to a wide serving platter, garnish with the remaining feta cheese and a tiny pinch of fresh parsley, and serve immediately alongside warm pita bread, grilled chicken, or roasted lamb.

Chef's Professional Tips for Success

- **Dry Your Greens and Veggies:** Excess moisture from rinsing the chickpeas or washing the cucumbers can water down your dressing. Take an extra minute to pat your ingredients dry.
- **The Onion Trick:** If you are sensitive to raw onions, soaking them in ice water for 10 minutes removes the sulfurous bite while keeping the wonderful crunch intact.
- **Customize Your Add-Ins:** Feel free to toss in diced bell peppers, pepperoncini slices, or toasted pine nuts for added crunch and color.

Nutritional Information

Note: Nutritional values are estimated per serving (1/6th of the total recipe) and may vary slightly based on specific brand ingredients used.

- Calories: 285 kcal
- Total Carbohydrates: 26 g
- Dietary Fiber: 7 g
- Sugars: 6 g
- Protein: 9 g
- Total Fat: 17 g
- Saturated Fat: 4 g
- Sodium: 480 mg
- Potassium: 420 mg
- Calcium: 145 mg

- Iron: 2.5 mg