MIDDLE EASTERN · BREAKFAST · SNACK

Labneh Balls with Za'atar or Aleppo Pepper in Oil

40 min · plus about 3 days straining and drying · Makes 10 × 1 ball (40 g before drying)
81 kcal a portion · Video 8:09 · Middle Eats

Vegetarian · Gluten-free ingredients · Nut-free

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Made from just yoghurt and salt, each ball is about 80 kcal with about 2 g carbs, including the oil that clings to it: a tangy, lighter swap for the same amount of cream cheese (about 135 kcal).

Diet notes: Keto (1.8 g net carbs a serve).

Ingredients

5 · MAKES 10 × 1 BALL (40 G BEFORE DRYING)

- [ ] 2¼ lb **plain dairy yoghurt** with live cultures (unstrained), strained 48 hours (about 14 oz labneh)
- [ ] ¾ tsp **salt** (about 40% stays in the labneh; the rest drains off with the whey)
- [ ] **za'atar**, for coating half the balls (about 1 g a ball)
- [ ] **Aleppo pepper**, for coating the other half (about 1 g a ball)
- [ ] **vegetable oil**, to cover the balls in the jar, topped with a little olive oil (count about 1 tsp a ball eaten with it)

Amounts in US units, converted from the cook's and rounded — the video has the originals.

Contains: Milk, Sesame. Check labels on stock, sauces and spice mixes.

Method

TIMES = THE MOMENT IN THE VIDEO

1. Wash and sterilise the cloth or nut-milk bag, bowls and jars to keep mould away. Mix 2¼ lb plain yoghurt with live cultures and ¾ tsp salt very well. 1:02
2. Spoon it into the bag, gather the yoghurt at the bottom and clip the bag tight above it. Hang it over a bowl or set it in a strainer for 48 hours, emptying the whey and flipping the bag after 24 hours. Strain in the fridge for a milder taste. 1:31
3. Stir the labneh (about 14 oz) smooth. With two spoons, drop 1½ oz blobs onto a tray lined with a tea towel and paper towels, cover with more towels and leave about 24 hours, moving them to dry towels halfway, until firm. 3:15
4. Wearing gloves, knead each piece until pliable, then roll it between your palms into a smooth ball with no cracks so it holds together in the jar. 4:38
5. Roll half the balls in za'atar and half in Aleppo pepper, pressing the coating on. Stack them in sterilised jars and cover completely with vegetable oil topped with a little olive oil; olive oil alone suits jars eaten within a few weeks. 5:17
6. Seal. Kept cool, the jars last a few months; once opened, keep in the fridge and eat within a few weeks. Spread a ball on bread with sliced tomato, olives and mint. 6:18

> **Tip** Middle Eats sterilises everything with baby-bottle tablets, as any wet spot can grow mould. Throw out any ball that shows mould. For a soft spread instead, strain only 24 hours and keep it in the fridge for 1–2 weeks.

The method is a summary in our words — the video shows every step.

One portion, 1 ball (40 g before drying), gives you

1 OF 10 · ESTIMATE

ENERGY	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATE	FIBRE	FAT	SODIUM
81 kcal	3.7 g	2.2 g	0.4 g	6.6 g	80 mg
340 kJ	7% of a day	1.8 g net · 1.5 g sugars	1% of a day	1.8 g saturated	4% of a day
		1% of a day		8% of a day	

Energy from net carbs 9% · protein 18% · fat 73% — fits keto: 1.8 g net carbs, 73% of the energy from fat

High in (20%+ of a day) Omega-3 28%

Source of (10–19%) Vitamin B12 12%

Recipe and video: Middle Eats (@MiddleEats) on YouTube — youtube.com/watch?v=Ub_dzZrpkIA, published 1 February 2023. All credit for the recipe goes to the cook; please watch and support their channel.

By Notbroken: the method summary, the unit conversions, the diet notes and the nutrition estimate — worked out from the ingredient list with USDA FoodData Central values; % of a day compares one serve with the US FDA daily values on food labels (2,000 kcal). Brands, portions and cooking change the real numbers.

General information about food, not medical or dietary advice. Free, no sign-up: notbroken.io/eat/labneh-balls-zaatar-aleppo