

Crostini with Garden Carrots, Fresh Cheese and Dukkah

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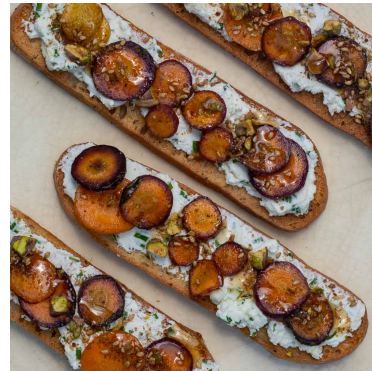
www.janetfletcher.com

Cakebread Cellars chef Brian Streeter provided this recipe for my latest cookbook, *Gather: Casual Cooking from Wine Country Gardens*. Dukkah, an Egyptian nut-and-spice blend, is the captivating seasoning that keeps you coming back for just one more toast. You will have leftover dukkah, but that's no problem. Store it in an airtight container and enjoy it later in the classic way, as a dip for bread with extra virgin olive oil. Good spice shops carry it if you don't want to make your own. On another occasion, substitute sliced roasted beets or butternut squash for the sautéed carrots.

Ingredients

Dukkah:

- 1/4 cup chopped pecans or raw pistachios
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon whole coriander seeds
- 1-1/2 teaspoons whole cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper



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- 12 baguette slices, cut 1/4-inch thick on the diagonal
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 pound small carrots, preferably mixed colors, scrubbed but not peeled
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 3/4 cup (about 6 ounces) Bellwether Farms fresh sheep cheese, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon thinly sliced chives
- Honey, warmed enough to drizzle

Directions

Make the dukkah: Put the pecans or pistachios in a pie tin and bake until lightly toasted, 5 to 10 minutes. Roughly chop the pistachios, if using. Toast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet over high heat, stirring constantly, until lightly colored and fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Let cool. Add the coriander and cumin seeds to the skillet and toast, stirring, until fragrant and starting to darken. With a mortar and pestle, pound the coriander and cumin seeds coarsely. Transfer to a small bowl and stir in the pecans or pistachios, sesame seeds, salt and a few grinds of pepper.

Preheat an oven to 375 °F. Brush the baguette slices lightly on both sides with olive oil. Arrange the slices on a baking sheet in a single layer and toast until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Slice the carrots in 1/8-inch-thick rounds. Heat a large skillet over high heat. Add the 1 tablespoon olive oil and the carrots and season with salt and pepper. Sauté, stirring, until the carrots are tender and starting to brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate and let cool to room temperature.

In a bowl, mash the cheese and chives with the back of a spoon until smooth and spreadable.

To assemble the crostini, spread 1 tablespoon of the cheese on each toast and arrange on a platter. Top each toast with a few rounds of carrots, using a mix of colors on each, and a generous pinch of dukkah. Drizzle the toasts with honey, using about 2 teaspoons. Serve immediately.

Serves 6