Curried Carrot Hummus

A little imagination and inspiration from your pantry can give you a whole new appreciation for hummus. This version uses white beans instead of chickpeas, and baked carrots for color and flavor. Add a spoonful of curry and you're on your way to a tasty hummus makeover.

-1/2 pound carrots (about 3 medium) trimmed and peeled
-several tablespoons olive oil
-4 peeled garlic cloves
-1 15- to 16-ounce can Great Northern or cannellini beans, rinsed
-1 tablespoon mild curry powder
-1/2 teaspoon *each* coriander and turmeric

-1/2 teaspoon (scant) salt
-1 tablespoon lemon juice or lime juice
-1/4 cup tahini
-handful fresh parsley or cilantro leaves

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. Cut the carrots into large chunks. Tear off 2 pieces of aluminum foil about 13 inches wide and place them on top of one another. Drizzle about a tablespoon olive oil in the center of the top piece and cover with the carrot chunks and 1 clove of garlic. Drizzle 1 tablespoon water over the carrots; salt and pepper them lightly. Seal the carrots in the doubled foil and bake for 30 to 40 minutes, until fork tender. Cool.

2. When the carrots are completely cooled, put them in a food processor with the rinsed beans, curry powder, coriander and turmeric, salt, lemon juice and tahini.

3. Process the ingredients to a smooth puree, adding just enough water to make a thick, smooth, spreadable texture. Add the water a tablespoon or two at a time so you don't overdo it. Add the parsley or cilantro and process briefly.

4. If you're not serving the hummus right away, transfer it to a covered container and refrigerate until using. Serve with vegetable sticks, chips or crackers, on bagels and rice cakes, or use on sandwiches. Makes almost 2 cups.

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