

amelia saltsman FOOD

SPICY-SWEET GRILLED VEGETABLES WITH SILAN



Makes 6 to 8 servings

Marry *silan* (also known as date honey, syrup, or molasses) and harissa (the classic North African spice paste) for a super simple, versatile, and exciting grill sauce. This is no mere marriage of convenience. This three-ingredient blend has notes of caramel, coffee, citrus, earth, heat, and smoke. It's great slathered over chicken, pork, or shrimp, and I especially love it with hearty beet, carrot, and sweet potato "steaks" on the grill.

Shanklish—thick labneh seasoned with za'atar and Aleppo pepper—is the perfect creamy counterpoint. But, tahini is awesome too! Accompany with a pile of fresh pita, and hot pickled peppers or any of the quick pickles you'll find in *The Seasonal Jewish Kitchen*.

You can use homemade silan or good quality store-bought (look for those that do not contain added sugar). Date syrup is available at Middle Eastern groceries, some supermarkets, and online.

Note: if using red beets, keep them separate during preparation to avoid staining the other vegetables.

For the vegetables:

$\frac{3}{4}$ pound each sweet potatoes, large carrots, and tennis-ball size beets

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup healthy oil, such as olive, avocado, or safflower

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup silan, homemade or good quality store-bought

2 heaping tablespoons harissa, homemade or good quality store-bought

2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt

For the Shanklish:

2 cups labneh, homemade or store-bought

2 cloves garlic

2 tablespoons za'atar spice blend

$\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon Aleppo, Maras, or Urfa pepper

To serve:

Chopped parsley, cilantro, or thyme leaves, optional

Cooked freekeh or other grain, optional

Pita, optional

Scrub or peel carrots and cut on the diagonal into largest possible oval slices, $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick. Scrub sweet potatoes and cut lengthwise into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick wedges. Scrub beets and cut on diagonal into largest possible disks, $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick

Have a bowl filled with ice and water ready near the stove. Cook carrots in generously salted boiling water until their color brightens and carrots are slightly flexible, 2 minutes. Lift carrots out with a spider or slotted spoon and drop into the ice water bath to stop the cooking process and preserve color. Repeat with the sweet potato wedges. Lift carrots and potatoes out of ice bath and drain on cloth or paper towels. Repeat blanching process with beets and place on separate towel. Pat vegetables dry. Vegetables may be prepared a day ahead to this point and refrigerated covered.

Prepare the Shanklish. Crush garlic through press into the labneh and add za'atar and Aleppo pepper to taste. Stir vigorously to blend. Labneh may be prepared a day ahead and refrigerated.

Heat a gas or charcoal grill to medium. Place oil, silan, harissa, and salt in a microwavable or heatproof bowl. Heat briefly in microwave oven or in a pot of simmering water to soften ingredients. Whisk to blend.

Toss silan mixture with vegetables to coat generously (toss red beets separately to prevent staining the other vegetables). Grill vegetables, reserving silan mixture, until nicely scored and tender, 4 to 6 minutes per side. Adjust heat or move vegetables to cooler part of grill as needed to avoid burning. As vegetables are done, return them to the remaining silan mixture and toss to coat.

Arrange vegetables on a platter, top with chopped herbs, if desired, and accompany with the shanklish, and freekeh or pita. Vegetables may be grilled several hours ahead and served at room temperature.

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