

SUMMER CHICKPEA SALAD

Chickpeas are pretty under-used in this country, to be honest. In places like Morocco, Italy and Spain they are prized like our Jersey new potato. Still, we have a lot more choice now than we used to have. If you go to a Spanish deli or specialist counter, you will generally be able to find jars of cooked chickpeas in water and these are the ones you want to make this salad really good. They should look a little plumper than tinned chickpeas but, of course, both tinned ones or dried ones can be used successfully.

This salad is a great one for making up as you go along; you can use different spices, sun-dried tomatoes and spicy chorizo sausages, for instance.

SERVES 4

1 small red onion, peeled

1-2 fresh red chillies, deseeded

2 handfuls of ripe red or yellow tomatoes

2 lemons

extra virgin olive oil

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 x 410g jar or tin of chickpeas, drained, or around 4 large handfuls of soaked and cooked chickpeas

a handful of fresh mint, chopped

a handful of fresh green or purple basil, finely ripped

200g/7oz feta cheese

- cucumber, diced
- green beans
- celery

First of all, finely slice your red onion. Once that's done, finely slice your chillies then roughly chop your tomatoes, mixing them in with the onion and chillies. Scrape all of this, and the juice, into a bowl and dress with the juice of 1½ lemons and about 3 times as much good extra virgin olive oil. Season to taste. Heat the chickpeas in a pan, then add 90 per cent of them to the bowl. Mash up the remaining chickpeas and add these as well – they will give a nice creamy consistency. Allow to marinate for a little while and serve at room temperature.

Just as you're ready to serve, give the salad a final dress with the fresh mint and basil. Taste one last time for seasoning – you may want to add the juice from your remaining lemon half at this point. Place on a nice serving dish and crumble over the feta cheese.

