

Winter Taverna Salad

Serves 4-6 | 20 minutes prep + 30 minutes cook time

1 medium winter squash (delicata, kobocha or butternut) OR 3 small beets, cut into 1 inch pieces

½ cup + 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper, to taste

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon Garlicki Umami Garlic Paste (or 1 clove fresh garlic, finely minced)

½ teaspoon dried Wellspend Oregano (trust us, the Oregano we import from Pantelleria puts all other dried oregano to shame)

1 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed

1-2 celery stalks, diced

1 fennel bulb, shaved into thin slices using a mandoline

½ cup pitted Kalamata olives

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

¼ cup minced red onion or shallot

2 tablespoons salt-packed capers, rinsed, drained, and coarsely chopped

2 scallions, thinly sliced

1(6-inch) pita

1 8-ounce block halloumi cheese, patted dry and cut into ¾-inch-thick slices

Holiday party season is here, and if you've ever found yourself panic-googling "easy crowd-pleasing side" ten minutes before leaving the house, we'd like to offer a calm, confident alternative: this salad. Adapted from a New York Times version of a recipe by Lidey Heuck, it's become our go-to party move because it checks every box—it's sturdy, adaptable, and doesn't need any last-minute fussing. You can make it in the morning (or even the night before), tuck it in the fridge, and it'll still look and taste great hours later.

It's also a nice break from the usual leafy suspects. The mix of crunchy vegetables, tangy dressing, and salty, pan-seared halloumi hits that rare sweet spot between "fresh" and "deeply satisfying." And while the original recipe leans summery (featuring cukes in tomato in place of fennel and squash), it's endlessly tweakable for the season—swap in roasted squash or sweet peppers, add a handful of herbs, skip the pita or double it, whatever feels right. It's the kind of dish that plays well with others, travels like a champ, and earns you bonus points for showing up with something that isn't another cheese board.

Here's our take—simple, sturdy, and ready to make you the person everyone asks for the recipe from.

Step 1 Pre-heat oven to 400°F.

To roast squash, cut in half lengthwise, scoop out seeds, and slice crosswise into 1" thick half moons. Drizzle a sheet pan with olive oil, lay the squash on the prepared baking sheet in a single layer, and drizzle with more olive oil and a sprinkle of salt. Roast for 20 minutes, or until squash is thoroughly cooked and starting to brown.

Step 2 In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, and oregano until everything looks like it's getting along. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Step 3 In a large bowl, toss together the squash or beets, chickpeas, celery, fennel, olives, parsley, red onion, capers, and scallions. Pour over the dressing and give it all a good mix—nothing fussy, just enough to coat everything nicely.

Step 4 Chop the pita into rough 1-inch pieces and toss with a drizzle of olive oil and a pinch of salt. Toast them in a skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until golden and crisp, about 5 minutes. Set aside to cool (and try not to eat them all).

Step 5 Drizzle the halloumi with a little olive oil, then sear it in the same skillet over medium-high heat until golden, about 2–3 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board and cut into bite-sized cubes.

Step 6 Add the pita and halloumi to the salad, toss everything together, and serve. It's good right away, but even better after it's had a little time to hang out. If you plan on serving the next day, wait to add the pita (don't want it to get soggy!).