

# LUKAS VOLGER

## Toasted Walnut & Feta Dip

This creamy, savory dip brings big flavor in small bites, and is also somehow the perfect excuse to eat a whole block of cheese in one sitting. When toasting the nuts, push them to the limit. You don't want them burnt, but you do want them toasted all the way through for maximum flavor.

Note: I recommend seeking out brine-packed feta, because it'll produce a creamier dip. I

developed this recipe with the Trader Joe's option in mind. But I also love Bulgarian feta, and the Valbreso brand. If brine-packed isn't available, you can make a dry packed one work by adding a little milk when you blitz the dip.

Makes about 2 cups

1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts

10.5 ounces feta packed in brine (brine reserved)

Zest from 1/2 lemon

Freshly ground black pepper

1.5 teaspoons olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

1 teaspoon dried oregano

Pinch crushed red pepper flakes

Pinch coarse or flaky salt

Preheat the oven to 350°F, and spread the walnuts out on an oven-safe skillet or small baking sheet. Toast for 15 to 20 minutes, until deeply browned and quite fragrant. You're looking for a well-toasted nut here, as they're a major flavor vehicle for the dip. Cool and set aside 1/4 cup of the nuts to use for topping.

Place the remaining 3/4 cup nuts in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a blade and pulse several times until finely chopped. Add the feta (reserving its brine), breaking it up into smaller pieces, as well as the lemon zest and several grinds of black pepper, and then process until smooth. The mixture will eventually coalesce into a ball, and then smooth out into a thick paste, and you'll need to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl a few times as you go. With the motor running, add 2 tablespoons of the reserved feta brine, or milk, if your feta is not brine-packed. Add another tablespoon in the same manner, if you prefer a lighter dip.

To make the topping, stir together the reserved walnuts with the 1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil, the oregano, the pepper flakes, and the flaky salt.

To serve, scrape the dip into a serving bowl. Create a little divot in the center and fill with the walnut mixture. Drizzle with olive oil and serve.

Stored in an airtight container, the dip will keep for about 5 days in the refrigerator. Store the walnut topping separately. It will thicken when cold, which isn't a terrible thing — it's still spreadable — but to achieve a light texture again, just re-whip it in your food processor.