Falafel recipe

**Ingredients**

* Makes 12-14 falafel (2 substantial starters)
* 100g dried chickpeas, cooked, or half a 400g tin of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
* 2 medium sweet potatoes (350-400g), scrubbed
* 30g gram flour (for a gluten-free option) or plain flour
* 20g fresh coriander, finely chopped
* 20g fresh mint, finely chopped
* 1 garlic clove, minced
* Half a red chilli, deseeded and very finely chopped
* Zest and juice of half a lemon
* 1 tsp ground cumin
* 1 tsp ground coriander
* Squeeze of lemon (optional)
* For the lemon tahini dressing:
* 3 tbsp tahini
* Juice of half a lemon (the other half of the one used above)
* 4 tbsp warm water
* To serve:
* 1 head of Baby Gem lettuce, broken into individual leaves
* Lime wedges (optional)

**Method**

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees. Cook the dried chickpeas, if using. Mash the cooked (or tinned), drained chickpeas roughly (you want them to add a degree of texture to the finished dish).

Place the sweet potatoes on a baking tray and bake in the oven for 30-45 minutes (or more if needed). They are done when the flesh is soft all the way through (skewer it with a knife to check). Leave to one side to cool while you prepare the other ingredients.

When they are cool enough to handle, scoop the flesh out of the sweet potatoes into a large bowl.

Mash it with a fork, then add in all the other ingredients, mixing until well combined.

Taste and adjust the seasoning – it should be a punchy enough mix that’s full of flavour, so add herbs, chilli, garlic, seasoning or lemon as you judge necessary.

Using two spoons, shape the falafel mix into balls (or use your hands, wetting them regularly so it doesn’t stick to your fingers too much).

Spread the falafel out on a baking tray lined with non-stick baking paper so they aren’t touching each other.

Bake for 10 minutes, then turn up the temperature to 220 degrees and bake for five minutes more. This will create a reasonably dry, almost crunchy exterior with a soft, warm centre.

To make the lemon tahini dressing, mix the tahini with the lemon juice and some salt and pepper in a small bowl before slowly adding the warm water to loosen it to a pouring consistency.

Serve each falafel in a Baby Gem lettuce leaf with a generous dash of the dressing – or even just a quick squeeze of lime – over it. These are lovely served piping hot but they’re still good after sitting for a while if you prefer.