

Dinner and A Book Episode #413

Menu:

Persian Festival Dinner
Fesenjan (Persian chicken)
Couscous
Borani Esfanaaj (Spinach and Yogurt)
Orange and Olive Salad
Stuffed Apricots
Tea

Recipes:

Persian Chicken (Fesenjan) Serves 6

1/2-cup butter or oil
2 onions, sliced thin
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
1/2-teaspoon cinnamon
1/2-teaspoon nutmeg
2 1/2 cups finely ground walnuts
2/3 cup concentrated cranberry juice
2 1/2 cups stock or water
1-3 Tablespoons sugar
1 Tablespoon salt
2 teaspoons pepper
1 1/2 pounds chicken, boneless, skinless, cubed
1-3 limes, juice only

1. Heat butter or oil over medium heat in a large Dutch oven. Add onions and sauté until wilted and translucent. Add garlic, cinnamon and nutmeg and sauté, stirring, for another 1-2 minutes.
2. Stir in walnuts, cranberry syrup, stock, sugar, salt, and pepper. Adjust sugar and salt to taste. Bring to a low boil and simmer 1/2 hour.
3. Add the chicken and simmer on low heat another 30-60 minutes. Halfway through the cooking time, add the limejuice to taste. The sauce will thicken and darken during this cooking time. Add water or stock to prevent the sauce from thickening too much.
4. Serve with plain white rice.

Fesenjan is a special occasion food in Iran.

Couscous

1-cup couscous and 1/2-cup water mixed into couscous. Let sit 5 minutes.

Add:

4 chopped tomatoes
1 peeled and chopped cucumber
8 chopped spring onions
12 chopped black olives
Juice of 1 lemon
6 tablespoons olive oil
1 bunch chopped parsley
1 bunch chopped cilantro
A few sprigs mint, chopped
Season with salt and pepper

Borani Esfanaaj (Spinach and Yogurt)

1 pound fresh spinach, chopped
1 cup of plain yogurt
2 onions, thinly sliced
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
Cooking oil
Salt and pepper

Wash spinach and cut into small pieces. Fry onions and garlic in oil until slightly golden. Add spinach and fry together over medium heat until cooked. Let it cool down completely. Add salt and pepper to yogurt to taste. Add spinach to yogurt and mix well.

Orange and Olive Salad

4-6 oranges, peeled and chopped
Juice from 1 lemon
3 tablespoons walnut or sesame oil
3 cloves garlic, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Handful of black olives
1-teaspoon paprika
A sprinkle of cumin
Pinch ground chili pepper

Dress the chopped oranges with lemon juice, oil, garlic, salt and add olives. Sprinkle cumin, paprika and chili pepper on top and serve.

Stuffed Apricots

Take 4 pounds dried apricots. Blend in blender until a fine paste. You might a teaspoon of water. Roll the fine paste into little balls. Roll balls in confectioner's sugar. Place a pistachio nut on top of each ball. Serve hot tea or water with the meal.

Dress the table with an embroidered tablecloth. Play a compact disc of Iranian music from your local public library. Read selections of Omar Khayyam's The Rubaiyat or stories from 1001 Nights.