

Dinner and A Book Episode #704

Menu:

Sabzi Khordan
Adas Polo
Mast-o-khiar
Salad shirazi
Borani-e esfenaj
Fruit and Tea

Recipes:

Sabzi Khordan

Place on a large platter: sprigs of mint, fresh basil and chives, 8-10 small, fresh very red radishes, chunks of onion, cubes of feta cheese, shelled walnuts and a pile of pita bread triangles. Guests fill the pita pocket with a sampling of all ingredients.

Dessert: Usually dessert in Iran is fruit, not sweet items. You can serve a large platter of grapes, nectarines, melon slices and red and white cherries.

Yogurt & Spinach Salad

Borani-e esfenaj

SERVINGS: 4

PREP TIME: 10 min. plus 15 min Refrigeration

COOKING TIME: 30 min.

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil, butter, or ghee
2 onions, peeled and thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
5 cups washed and chopped fresh spinach (about 12 ounces), or 1 1/2 cups frozen spinach, thawed
1 1/2 cups drained yogurt
1/2-teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Garnish (optional)

1/2 teaspoon ground saffron threads, dissolved in 1 tablespoon hot water
1 tablespoon dried rose petals

Borani recipes are named for the fourth-century Sasanian queen, Pourandokht. Queen Pourandokht was fond of yogurt, and her chef made her many dishes with drained yogurt and vegetables. These dishes were called Pourani after her, and in time Pourani became Borani.

1. In a large skillet heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and fry for .20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent burning, until the onions are soft and brown.
2. Add the spinach, cover, and steam 5 to 10 minutes, until the spinach is wilted.
3. Remove from heat and let cool for 10 to 15 minutes; transfer to a serving bowl.
4. Add the yogurt, salt and pepper. Refrigerate for at least 15 minutes, or up to 8 hours, before serving. If the salad is refrigerated for more than an hour, remove it from the refrigerator 10 minutes before serving.
5. Garnish with saffron water and rose petals or any other edible flower. Serve with lavash bread. NUSH-E JAN!

Yogurt& Cucumber Salad

Mast-o khiaar

SERVINGS: 4

PREP TIME: 15min. plus 15 min. refrigeration

COOKING TIME: none

- 1 long seedless or seeded cucumber, peeled and diced
- 3 cups plain low-fat or whole yogurt
- 1/4 cup chopped scallions
- 2 tablespoons chopped' fresh mint
- , 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano, or 1/2 teaspoon dried.
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme, or 1/2 teaspoon dried
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon, or 1/2 teaspoon dried
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
- 3 tablespoons chopped walnuts
- 1-teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2cup raisins, washed and drained

GARNISH

Sprigs of fresh mint
Sprigs of fresh dill
3 tablespoons dried rose petals
2 tablespoons raisins
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
1 radish, diced

In summer, this salad is frequently transformed into a wonderfully refreshing cold soup, called Abdugh khiar in Persian, by adding cup of croutons or crumbled, toasted lavish bread, 2 or 3 ice cubes and cold water to create a soup of the preferred consistency. My husband doubles the raisin quantity and adds a whole cup of water to make his a very thin soup that can be sipped straight from a bowl or cup.

1. In a serving bowl, combine all the ingredients except the raisins. Mix thoroughly and adjust seasoning. The raisins may be added now, but they will absorb liquid and become plump and soft instead of chewy.
2. Refrigerate for at least 15 minutes, or up to 4 hours, before serving. If the salad is refrigerated for more than an hour, remove it from the refrigerator 10 minutes before serving. Just prior to serving add the raisins and mix thoroughly.
3. Garnish with the mint, rose petals, raisins, and walnuts and serve with lavish bread. NUSH-E JAN!

Rice with Lentils & Dates

Adas Polow

SERVINGS: 6

PREP TIME: 35 min.

COOKING TIME: 1 1/2 hours

3 cups long-grain white basmati rice
3/4-cup vegetable oil, butter, or ghee
2 medium onions, peeled and thinly sliced
5 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
1-pound skinless, boneless chicken or meat (lamb, veal, beef) cut in 1-inch cubes
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2-teaspoon ground turmeric
1-teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons Persian spice mix (advieh)

1 teaspoon ground saffron threads, dissolved in 4 tablespoons hot water
1 1/2 cups green lentils
1-cup raisins
2 cups pitted dates
1/2 cup slivered orange peel, bitterness removed
2 tablespoons plain yogurt

1. Pick over and wash the rice

2. In a medium pot; heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add half the sliced onion and stir-fry for 5 minutes, until translucent. Add the garlic and meat and stir-fry for 10 minutes longer. Add 1 teaspoon salt, the pepper, turmeric, and cinnamon, 1-teaspoon advieh and 1 1/2 cups water. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 25 minutes over low heat. Add a few drops of saffron water and set aside.

3. Meanwhile, cook the lentils in 3 cups of water with 1/2teaspoon salt for 10 minutes.

Drain the lentils, reserve the water for later use, and set aside.

4. In a large skillet heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add the remaining onion and fry for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until golden brown. Add the raisins, dates, and slivered orange peel, and stir-fry 2 minutes longer; set aside.

5. In a large non-stickpot, bring 8 cups of water and 2 tablespoons salt to a boil. Add the rice to the pot and boil briskly for 6 to 10 minutes, gently stirring twice with a wooden spoon to loosen any grains that stick to the bottom. Once the rice rises to the top, it is done.

6. Drain the rice in a large, fine-mesh strainer and rinse with 3 cups luke-warm water.

7. In a bowl, whisk together 4 tablespoons oil, 1/2cup water, 2 spatulas full of rice, the yogurt, and 1 tablespoon saffron water, and spread the mixture over the bottom of the pot. This will form the golden crust, or tah dig.

8. Place 2 spatulas full of rice in the pot. Sprinkle with 1/4-teaspoon advieh. Add a spatula full of the lentil mixture and then a spatula full of the meat. Repeat, alternating layers of rice with lentils and meat, mounding the ingredients in the shape of a pyramid. Sprinkle the remaining advieh on top.

9. Cover the pot and cook the rice mixture for 10 minutes over medium heat.

10. Mix 1/4 cup cold water with 4 tablespoons oil and pour over rice. Sprinkle on the remaining saffron water. Place a clean dishtowel or 2 layers of paper towel over the pot to absorb condensation and cover firmly with the lid to prevent steam from escaping. Reduce the heat to low and cook 50 minutes longer, taking care that the towel does not burn.

11. Remove the pot from the heat and cool it, still covered, on a damp surface for 5 minutes to loosen the crust.

12. Remove the lid, hold the serving platter tightly over the pot, and invert the two together, unmolding the entire mound onto the platter. The rice will emerge as a golden-crust cake, to be garnished with edible flowers and herbs, then served in wedges. Alternately, you may lift out the rice mixture, taking care not to disturb the tah dig, and heap it onto a serving platter. Serve the tah dig separately on the side. NUSH-E JAN!