

**12/20/09 - Rice, Beans and Kuftes, Thursday Night Dinner**



If you speak with anyone from the Sephardic community in Seattle, Washington, you will find that virtually everyone, me included, ate avicas con arroz or beans and rice on Thursday nights for dinner. Usually this dinner also included some kuftes (beef meatballs with parsley, on a bed of sautéed onions, all simmering in a tomato sauce). Thursday night dinner was accompanied by a chopped salad with

lemon and olive oil dressing and crusty French bread.

You are probably wondering what the significance of Thursday night dinner is. In a time when dining out was a rare occurrence and there were often many mouths to feed, this hearty and sometimes vegetarian dinner was meant to be a do-ahead meal that could be made early in the day or even the day before. The menu uses simple ingredients, locally available, that are economical. The meal left homemakers with more time to prepare for the elaborate Friday night dinner and the Sabbath.

Rice, beans, and kuftes are my comfort foods. Although they are of humble origins, they are hearty, tasty, and banish the cold on a winter night. The rice, hot and fluffy with a touch of heat has crusty corners on the bottom worth fighting over; the kufte, meaty but not too heavy, integrate the sweet of the onions with the green parsley taste; and lastly the silky and earthy beans are all dishes that complement each other and provide sound nutrition. The leftovers are great, especially kufte sandwiches on a crusty French roll or in a puffy warm pita. Include a couple of sliced pepperoncinis and viola, a sandwich delicious enough to inspire cravings. Leftover bean puree is wonderful spread on crostini, and eaten with salad for lunch.

You can halve the quantities if you are only two for dinner, but I always make the whole amount and freeze the rest. When my eldest son attended college in San Diego I would freeze single serving portions for him so he could have a home cooked meal for dinner while studying.

Rice with Tomato and Onions (Arroz)



2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion

1 Anaheim chile

1 teaspoon salt

cracked pepper to taste

2 teaspoons cumin

½ cup diced tomatoes in puree

2 cup long grain white or brown rice

3 and ½ cups water





Peel and dice the onion with a sharp knife. Wash and dry the Anaheim chile. Cut off the stem end and the pointed tip of the chile. Slit it open lengthwise and lay the chile flat. Cut out any seeds and white veins. Cut the chile into long strips lengthwise and then dice into small pieces.

Preheat a saucepan with a tight-fitting lid. Add the olive oil and then add the diced onions. Sauté for a few moments, and when the onions wilt, add the diced chile. Sauté the onions and chile another few minutes on medium heat, until the onions are translucent and sweet. Season them with salt and cumin powder.

Add the tomatoes, stir, and then add the rice. Stir the rice to combine with the onions and chilies. Lastly add the water, cover, and bring the rice to a boil. The moment the rice boils, turn down the heat to the lowest setting and let it simmer with the lid on for about another fifteen to twenty minutes until all the water is absorbed and it begins to stick on the bottom. Leave the rice covered for a bit before serving or if you make this early in the day, reheat it slowly over a low flame.



Sephardic White Bean Soup



1 16 ounce package of Great Northern Beans

1 large onion

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup of chopped parsley

½ cup of chopped tomatoes in puree

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

1/2 teaspoon cumin or more (optional)

1/2 teaspoon baharat (optional)

3 quarts of water

Place the package of beans in a strainer and rinse with cold water. Check for any stones or unattractive looking beans or debris. Let the beans drain over a bowl.

Peel the onion and dice it into medium small size pieces. Preheat a large Dutch oven, add the olive oil and then add the diced onions. Sauté the onion for two minutes on medium and then season it with salt and pepper. Add cumin and baharat for a stronger flavored dish. Next add the parsley and stir to combine. Pour in the tomatoes, stir, and then add the beans.

Add 3 quarts of cold water and bring the pot to a boil. Cover with the lid, leaving it slightly ajar and turn down the heat. Let the beans simmer for around two hours. The beans are done when the liquid is no longer watery looking but thick, almost opaque and the beans are very soft.

### Everyday Beef Kuffles



2 pounds of ground beef chuck

1 cup of chopped fresh parsley (curly or Italian)

1 cup Panko (Japanese bread crumbs)

½ teaspoon salt

Freshly cracked pepper

2 teaspoons cumin (optional)

2 teaspoons baharat (optional)

5 eggs

Breading

1 and ½ cups flour

3 eggs

2 and ½ cups Panko

1 teaspoon salt

Safflower or Canola Oil for frying

Sauce

2 -3 large onions

2 tablespoons of olive oil

2 large 28 oz cans of chopped tomatoes in juice

1 regular 14 ounce can of chopped tomatoes in puree

½ teaspoon salt

Cracked pepper to taste

1 teaspoon baharat (optional)

Place the ground beef chuck in a bowl. Add the seasonings, panko, parsley and 4 of the eggs. Mix together with your hands lightly. If you over mix the ground beef it

becomes gummy. If the mixture is dry, add the fifth egg.

Divide the kufte mix into 30-32 balls. Roll them lightly in flour.



I divide and roll all the kufte at one time. Next, I place them on a large sheet of aluminum foil next to my stove where I will be dipping and frying them.

Crack the next three eggs and beat them together in a bowl. Place the panko crumbs in another shallow bowl. Preheat your sauté pan. Add oil to about 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep. Take a flour coated kufte ball in your hand, flatten it into a patty about 1-2 inches in diameter dip it in the beaten egg and then in the panko crumbs to coat. Next, place the coated kufte in the medium hot oil and fry, turning only once, until golden brown. Remove the kufte from the oil and drain on paper towels. If you use tongs to turn the kufte rather than poking with a fork the oil will foam less and they are easier to turn.





Peel the two large onions and slice them in thin rings. Place the onions in a large Dutch oven or large fry pan that has been heated and contains 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Season the onions with salt and pepper and baharat. Sauté the onions on medium low heat until they begin to caramelize.



Place the fried kufte on top of the onions. Pour the tomatoes over the kufte. Cover and simmer for about an hour until the kufte are fluffy and have finished cooking through. Serve with rice.

Yield 30-32 Kufte

Serving Size 2-4 per person



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