

12/20/09 - White Beans, Kuftes, and Rice 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 sauteed 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 *kufte*s 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, integrates the sweet of onions with the green parsley taste; and lastly the silky and earthy beans complete the trio of 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 chili

1 teaspoon salt

cracked pepper to taste

2 teaspoons cumin

½ cup diced tomatoes in puree

2 cup long grain rice

3 and ½ cups water





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

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

Add tomatoes, stir, and add rice. Stir rice to combine with the onions and chilies. Lastly add water, cover, and bring to a boil. The moment rice boils, turn down heat to lowest setting and let simmer with lid on for about another fifteen to twenty minutes, until all water is absorbed and rice begins to stick on bottom. Leave 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 Great Northern Beans

1 large onion

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup chopped parsley

½ cup 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

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

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

Add 3 quarts of cold water and bring pot to a boil. Cover with lid, leaving it slightly ajar and turn down heat to medium low or low. Let 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 ground beef chuck

1 cup chopped fresh parsley

1 cup Panko (Japanese bread crumbs, non dairy, kosher)

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 for frying

Sauce

2 to 3 large onions

2 tablespoons oil

2 large 28 oz cans chopped tomatoes in juice

1 regular 14 ounce can chopped tomatoes in puree

½ teaspoon salt

Cracked pepper to taste

1 teaspoon baharat (optional)

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

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



Divide and roll all *kufte* at one time. dredge them in flour and, place them on a large sheet of aluminum foil next to stove. Crack three eggs and beat them together in a bowl. Place panko crumbs in another shallow bowl. Take a flour coated kufte ball in your hand, flatten it into a patty about 1-2 inches in diameter dip it in beaten egg and then roll in panko crumbs to coat. Set them all aside on a aluminum foil.

Heat sauté pan to medium high Add oil to about to ¼ inch deep next, place coated *kufte* in medium hot oil and fry, turning only once, until golden brown. Use tongs to turn, do not pierce with a fork. Remove *kufte* from oil and drain on paper towels. If you use tongs to turn *kufte* rather than poking with a fork oil will foam less and they are easier to turn.





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



Place fried *kufte* on top of onions. Pour tomatoes over *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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