

Try this unusual vegetable stew from Morocco

There's nothing more exotic than the foods of Morocco, North Africa's aromatic seasonings — including saffron, ginger, and cinnamon — blend with colorful, sun-drenched Mediterranean fruits, vegetables and grains to make one of the world's most adventurous cuisines.

And a healthy cuisine it is as well, with an abundance of legumes, herbs, olive oil and fish.

The core ingredient of Moroccan cooking is couscous, a tiny pellet-like pasta made from semolina wheat and water. It is steamed and served in a variety of ways with lamb, chicken and vegetables.

Boxes of instant couscous can be found in the pasta and rice section of most supermarkets.

Try it cooked in vegetable broth with chopped dried apricots, dates and raisins, seasoned with saffron, cinnamon and sugar, and sprinkled with toasted, slivered almonds.

The Moroccan pantry includes lots of olives, chickpeas, fava

beans and nuts. Zucchini, eggplants, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, garlic, lettuce, artichokes, okra, spinach, beans, leeks and fennel are all widely used in cooking.

These traditional Mediterranean foods are made uniquely Moroccan with the addition of aromatic spices and seasonings such as cumin, cinnamon, cayenne pepper, anise, mint, cardamom, turmeric and saffron.

Fruits flourish in this region — bananas, peaches, oranges, lemons, mangoes, figs, watermelon, pomegranates, dates, grapes and apricots are plentiful.

Many fruits are dried and used in sweet and savory dishes. Orange juice is used to flavor soups and sauces; lemon and lime juice is squeezed onto meat, fish and poultry before broiling.

Harissa is a distinctive, fiery paste used as an ingredient in many recipes and served at most Moroccan meals as a condiment. It can be found in Middle Eastern markets, or you can make it fresh by combining, in a blender,

minced garlic clove, cayenne, ground cumin, dried chili peppers and olive oil. It's delicious used as a dip for chunks of warm bread.

Other Moroccan specialties include *djaj m'chermel*, a classic chicken dish with preserved lemons and olives; *m'choui*, slow-roasted lamb seasoned with cumin, cayenne and salt; *char-moula*, a marinade of olive oil, lemon juice, coriander, saffron, garlic, paprika and cayenne (also a delicious sauce for baked fish); and *harira*, a hearty lemony lamb and lentil soup.

NORTH AFRICAN VEGETABLE STEW

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped

- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 8.5-oz. can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 small zucchini, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1/2 cup parsley, chopped
- 1/2 cup raisins
- Hot pepper sauce to taste

Heat oil in large non-stick pot or Dutch oven. Add onion and spices; cook 10 minutes or until onion is limp, stirring frequently. Add tomatoes, sweet potatoes, water and lemon juice. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Add garbanzo beans, zucchini, parsley and raisins. Cover and simmer 10 more minutes, until zucchini is tender. Season with hot pepper sauce to taste.

Nutrition information: Each of the four, 1-cup servings contains 218 calories and four grams of fat.



Stewing: This stew provides new flavors for many American cooks as it utilizes common spices from North Africa.

Information and recipe provided by the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Quick Cooking

Chicken with piquillos, tomatoes and olives

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicken With Piquillos, Tomatoes and Olives is an easy one-pot meal with a Spanish accent that will take about 30 minutes to get on the table.

The recipe, for four diners, is based on quick-cooking chicken breasts with fresh harvest vegetables. As in the traditional dish from Spain, color and flavor are added with piquillos — the Spanish name for a kind of sweet-piquant red peppers, roasted and packed in jars — and green olives.

The dish may be served over saffron rice, to complete the savory combination.

CHICKEN WITH PIQUILLOS, TOMATOES AND OLIVES

- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pep-

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- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 4 chicken breast halves, boned and skinned (about 1 1/2 pounds meat)
- 2 large sweet green bell peppers, cut in 1/2-inch squares (about 2 cups)
- 2 large onions, cut in thin wedges (about 2 cups)
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic (about 1 large clove)
- 1 pound plum tomatoes, chopped (about 2 1/2 cups)
- 1 teaspoon chicken bouillon granules
- 1/2 cup piquillos or regular roasted red peppers, drained, cut in chunks
- 1/2 cup small pitted green olives, sliced
- In a cup, combine salt, pepper

and paprika; sprinkle on both sides of chicken. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil until hot. Add chicken, green peppers, onion and garlic to skillet; cook, stirring frequently and turning chicken to brown on both sides, about 5 minutes.

Remove chicken from skillet. Add tomatoes and bouillon granules; cook uncovered, stirring until tomatoes are softened, about 10 minutes. Return chicken to skillet. Reduce heat to medium; cover and simmer until chicken is cooked through, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in piquillo peppers and olives and cook just until heated through, about 2 minutes.

Serve over saffron rice, if desired.

Makes four servings.
Recipe from: *Foods From Spain*.

Santa Fe chilled nectarine soup

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

This chilled nectarine soup combines summer fruits with Southwestern flavors.

SANTA FE CHILLED NECTARINE SOUP

- 2 pounds (about 8 small) fresh nectarines, cut up

- 1 cup apple juice
- 1 cup cran-raspberry cocktail juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves

Combine nectarines with juices, salt, pepper flakes and vinegar in electric blender. Whirl until smooth and blended. Add cilantro leaves and whirl in a stop-and-go fashion a few seconds just to chop. Makes five 1-cup servings.

Recipe from: *California Tree Fruit Agreement*.

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