

Persian chicken with orange

Azita Bina-Seibel's luxurious Persian chicken is made with saffron, apricots, currants, cranberries, almonds, and her own candied orange peel. Serve it with white rice (above). *Serves 6.*

- 1 medium Navel orange
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup sugar
- 2½ tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cups hot water
- ¼ teaspoon saffron
- 12 chicken thighs, skin removed
- Salt, to taste
- 1 cup dried apricots, chopped
- ½ cup currants (or raisins)
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup slivered almonds
- ½ cup chopped shelled pistachios

1. Peel the orange. (Save the fruit for another recipe.) With a spoon, scrape off and discard the white pith from the inside of the rind. Slice the rind into very thin 1-inch-long strips. You should have between ¾ cup and 1 cup of rind.
2. In a saucepan, combine the rind with water to cover it. Bring to a boil and boil for 5 minutes. Drain the rind, add fresh water to cover and boil again. Repeat one more time to make a total of three times. (This removes the bitterness from the peel.)
3. In the same saucepan, combine

the 1 cup water and the sugar. Bring to a boil. Add the orange rind, lower the heat to medium, and simmer the rind for about 40 minutes or until it is candied and there's hardly any liquid in the pan. Transfer the rind to a sheet of waxed paper to dry.

4. In a large flameproof casserole, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring often, for 8 minutes or until they are golden. Remove them from the pan.
5. In a bowl, combine the 2 cups hot water and the saffron.
6. Sprinkle the chicken with salt.
7. In the same skillet used for the onions, heat the remaining 1½ tablespoons oil. Add the chicken, skinned side down, and brown for 4 minutes. Turn the pieces over and spoon the onions on top. Pour in the saffron water. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes.
8. Stir in the apricots, currants or raisins, cranberries, almonds, pistachios, and orange peel. Recover, and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes more or until the chicken is cooked through and the fruits are softened.

Adapted from Lala Rokh restaurant

Lamb tagine with prunes

Cookbook author Claudia Roden says that this lamb and prune mixture is one of the most popular tagines in North Africa. *Serves 2.*

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 pounds lamb shoulder, trimmed of excess fat and cut into 1½-inch pieces
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon saffron threads, crumbled with your fingers
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2½ cups water, or more, if necessary
- 1½ cups prunes (dried plums)
- 1 to 3 tablespoons honey
- ½ cup slivered almonds, toasted

1. In a large flameproof casserole, heat the oil and when it is hot, brown the meat all over, stirring constantly.
2. Stir in the cinnamon, ginger, saffron, salt, pepper, onion, and garlic. Pour in enough water to just cover the meat. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, cover the pan, and simmer gently for 1½ hours or until the meat is tender. Add more water, if necessary, to keep the meat submerged in liquid.
3. Add the prunes, recover the pan, and cook 30 minutes more. The liquid should become a thick sauce.
4. Stir in enough honey to suit your taste and cook 5 minutes more. Garnish with almonds.

Adapted from "The New Book of Middle Eastern Food"