



Moroccan-style beef and apricot stew with naartjie and chickpea couscous

Getting chilly isn't it? All the more reason to warm your [Eat For The Earth](#) guests up with [Jane-Anne Hobbs Rayner's](#) Moroccan stew.

Jane-Anne's Eat For The Earth Menu

Iced beetroot and gin shots

Slow-cooked Moroccan-style beef and apricot stew with naartjie and chickpea couscous

Pear and blackberry almond crumble



This is a deeply savoury, spicy stew that needs several hours to cook, but is well worth waiting for. Beef and apricots are an odd mixture, but somehow this combination works.

Please don't be put off by the prunes in this recipe: they are an essential ingredient, enriching and darkening the sauce as they dissolve. Prunes, like anchovies, are magical ingredients that should never be mentioned when someone says, 'My, this tastes amazing. What did you put in it?'

In this recipe, the spicing is done in two stages, for good reason. Because it's a dish that requires long, slow cooking, the spices tend to blur together after a few hours, fading into gentle background music. Half an hour before it's served, the dish is re-spiced and given a smart kick in the pants. Please use really fresh spices.

I've specified shin for this dish – an inexpensive cut that dissolves into the most tender and unctuous meat – but you can use stewing beef of any kind. Ask your butcher. Avoid ordinary chunks of steak (such as 'goulash meat') because they tend to turn stringy and dry after prolonged cooking. You can also make this with a nice cut of pork, such as pork neck, or with cubes of lean lamb.

Ingredients (serves 6):

For the spicing (added in two stages; please read recipe below):

2 tbsp (30ml) ground cinnamon

A generous pinch of saffron threads

2 tbsp (30ml) ground cumin

2 tbsp (30ml) ground coriander

1 tbsp (15ml) turmeric

1 tbsp (15ml) ginger

Combine all the spices, and then divide the mixture in half. Set aside.

For the stew:

4 tsp (20ml) vegetable oil

4 tsp (20ml) butter

3 onions, peeled and finely chopped

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and grated

1.5 kg stewing beef (preferably boneless shin, see notes above), fat and sinew removed, cubed

2½ cups (625ml) stock (chicken, beef or vegetable)

1 cup freshly squeezed naartjie or orange juice

1 tin of Italian tinned tomatoes, chopped

10 prunes, de-pipped and chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tsp (10ml) honey

¾ cup (190ml) dried apricots, roughly chopped

For the couscous:

1 packet couscous

Boiling water or stock, according to packet instructions

1 tin of chickpeas, drained

1 tbsp (15ml) finely chopped preserved lemon

The finely grated rind and juice of a naartjie or orange

The juice of a lemon

3 tbsp (45ml) olive oil

1 tbsp (15ml) ground cumin

Salt and freshly ground pepper

To serve:

A handful of flaked, toasted almonds

Finely chopped fresh coriander

Method:

1. Put the olive oil and butter into a big pot or pan and place over a high heat. When the oils have just stopped sizzling, add the onions, garlic and ginger, and the set-aside half-quantity of spices (see above).

2. Cook over a moderate heat, stirring often, until the onion softens and begins to turn golden. Don't allow the mixture to burn, which will make it bitter. Using a slotted spoon (so the fat drains back into the pan), remove the onion-spice mixture and set aside.

3. Now turn up the heat slightly and fry the beef, in batches, until it is lightly browned on all sides.

4. Return the onion mixture to the pan. Pour in the stock and the naartjie juice, tinned tomatoes and prunes. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, and then immediately turn down the heat. Cover the pot with a tilted lid and turn down the heat to a low setting so that the stew bubbles gently.

5. Cook for three hours, stirring every now and then. The cooking time depends on the ferocity of your hob, but, as a general guide: when the sauce is rich and slightly thickened, and the meat is very tender when nudged with a fork, it's time to do the second spicing. Remove the lid, add the remaining spice mix, and stir in the apricots and the honey. Allow the dish to simmer, uncovered, for another thirty minutes.

6. Twenty minutes before serving, make the couscous: prepare the couscous according to the packet instructions, using boiling water or a good stock. Fluff up the grains with a fork and mix in the remaining couscous ingredients. Toss well to combine.

7. To serve: tip the couscous into big, warmed serving dish. Pile the beef stew on top, and top with toasted flaked almonds and chopped fresh coriander.