

Lamb Stew with Lemons and Figs

Servings: 6

Source: Bon Appetit, Feb. 2006

Ingredients

- 1½ cups Plain Whole-Milk Yogurt
- 3 Chopped Fresh Mint
- ½ cup Warm Water
- ¼ teaspoon Saffron Threads, Crumbled
- 1 2½ lb Boneless Lamb Shoulder, Trimmed, Cut Into 1 To 1½" Cubes
- 2 Olive Oil
- 2 Onions (about 1 Lb), Thinly Sliced
- 1 small Lemon (preferably Meyer), Ends Trimmed, Quartered Lengthwise
- 4 Garlic Cloves, Minced
- 1 teaspoon Minced Peeled Fresh Ginger
- ¼ teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon Cayenne Pepper
- 1 (14 oz) can Diced Tomatoes In Juice
- 1 cup Dried Figs - Stems Trimmed, Quartered Lengthwise
- 2½ cups Chicken Broth

Method

Set strainer lined with double layer of cheesecloth over medium bowl. Place yogurt in strainer; cover and chill 3 to 5 hours to drain. Transfer yogurt to small bowl. Stir in mint; season with salt and pepper. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Chill.)

Place ½ cup warm water and saffron in small bowl; let stand at least 20 minutes to infuse.

Sprinkle lamb with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tbsp oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat. Working in batches, cook lamb until brown on all sides, adding more oil as needed, about 5 minutes per batch.

Transfer lamb to large bowl. Pour all but 1 tbsp fat from pot (or add 1 tbsp oil if dry); heat pot over medium heat. Add onions; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Saute until beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Add lemon, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, and cayenne. Stir 1 minute. Add saffron mixture; stir, scraping up browned bits. Add tomatoes with juice, figs, and lamb with any juices to pot. Stir to coat. Add 2½ cups broth.

Bring stew to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, then cover with lid slightly ajar and simmer until meat is tender, stirring occasionally and adding more broth by ¼ cupfuls as needed if dry, about 1½ hours. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (Can be made 2 days ahead. Cool slightly. Refrigerate uncovered until cold, then cover and chill.)

Bring stew to simmer, thinning with more chicken broth if necessary. Divide stew among 6 plates; top each serving with dollop of minted yogurt. Place wedge of Crispy Noodle Cake alongside each and serve.

Crispy Noodle Cake - 6 Servings

12 oz fresh linguine, 3 tbsp olive oil, divided, ¼ c chopped fresh Italian parsley

Cook pasta in large pot of boiling salted water until tender but still firm to bite, stirring occasionally. Drain. Transfer pasta to medium bowl, toss with 1 tbsp oil and parsley. Season generously with salt and pepper. (Can be prepared 1 hour ahead. Let pasta stand at room temperature, tossing occasionally.)

Lightly oil large plate. Heat 1 tbsp oil in heavy medium skillet over medium heat. Add pasta to skillet, spreading evenly, flattening top, and pressing down with spatula to compress.

Cook until brown and crisp, about 3 minutes. Carefully invert cake onto prepared plate. Return skillet to medium heat. Add remaining 1 tbsp oil. Slide noodle cake into skillet and cook until brown and crisp on bottom, about 3 minutes. Transfer cake to cutting board, cut into wedges, and serve.