

Lebanese Lamb Stew

Yakhnat al-banadura (tomato stew). The tomatoes simmer for a number of hours, making a thick, savory sauce that gives you a satisfying punch in the mouth. This is a combination of the sweetness from the onions and cinnamon, acidity of the tomatoes, smokiness of the eggplant, and that wonderful peppery heat. Served with rice it's a happy, hearty dinner.

6 tablespoons [ghee](#) (or butter)

1/4 cup of pistachios, roasted in the oven for 10 minutes at 325, cooled, and coarsely chopped

1 1/4 lb boneless leg or shoulder of lamb, trimmed of any large pieces of fat and chopped into small pieces

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 teaspoons fresh thyme, washed and minced

1 large Spanish onions, 1/2 inch dice

3 medium-sized tomatoes, seeded and 1/2 inch dice

1 28 ounce can of whole peeled tomatoes

2 small eggplants (preferably Italian, Indian, or Japanese)

Spice Mixture

3 teaspoons pepper, freshly ground

2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 teaspoon allspice

1/4 teaspoon nutmeg, freshly grated

3 teaspoons salt

White flour for dusting

Olive oil for searing

Preparing the lamb

Prepare the spice mixture and once mixed, divide in half, reserving half for the vegetables. Pour some flour onto a small plate. Roll the lamb lightly in the flour to coat, then add a light dusting of the spices evenly to each piece.

Searing

Get a skillet going on high heat and add enough olive oil to coat the bottom. Cook each side until the meat is slightly brown, no more than a minute. Remove from pan.

Getting the sauce going

In a large, heavy-bottomed sauce pan, heat the ghee over medium high heat. Add in the garlic and sauté for a minute, then add in the onions and saute until translucent, about 8 minutes. Peel, and dice the eggplant into 1/2 inch squares. Place in a bowl and cover with a paper towel to prevent oxidation. Once the onions are translucent, add in the eggplant and saute for a couple of minutes. Turn the heat down to medium-low. Add in the diced and canned tomatoes. Stir in the spice mixture and thyme. Stir in the meat. Cover and cook in the retained heat of you WFO for 3-4 hours, stirring periodically. My WFO was 350F when it when and 250F when it came out. Probably too hot but I think the dish if very forgiving. If the dish gets too dry, add in some dry red wine. Mine wasn't dry but I added the wine anyway ;-). Sprinkle the pistachios on the top and serve over rice.

Rice

1 cup long grain rice, (Basmati is good for this dish, short white or Japanese rice is not preferred)

1 tablespoon ghee

2 cups warm water

1 teaspoon salt

Rinse the rice and drain it with a strainer. In a medium-sized heavy-bottom sauce pan, melt the ghee over medium high heat. Saute the rice until it begins to stick, stirring frequently, about 1 minute. Add the water

and salt and bring to a boil. Reduce to low, cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove the lid and let sit for 5 minutes.