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Moroccan Braised Chicken With Dates

CAROL GOODMAN KAUFMAN (/AUTHORS/CAROL-GOODMAN-KAUFMAN) |

February 4, 2020



Moroccan Braised Chicken With Dates (Carol Goodman Kaufman)

Serves 6

active:
15 min



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Well before anybody had ever heard of National Arbor Day, we Jews had Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for Trees. On this holiday – while still the dead of winter here, it's the beginning of spring in Israel – we eat many fruits, as well as samples of the seven species mentioned in the Torah.

Of those seven species, there is one that conjures up images of camel caravans, desert oases, and fragrant spices. After all, in the Book of Deuteronomy (31:20), we read that the Land of Israel is “a land flowing with milk and honey.” That honey, archaeologists believe, is not the clover variety that we can purchase at the local supermarket. Rather, it is the syrup made from dates.

Soft, sensuous, and seriously sweet, the fruit of the date palm is God's gift to humanity. It is so important that it is mentioned throughout the Tanach: in Exodus, Psalms, Song of Songs, Ezekiel, First Kings, and Second Chronicles. Our ancient ancestors valued the date so much that they used its image in the Temple.

Nothing can beat biting into a Medjool date, a large and luscious caramel-and-honey-flavored delight. Often referred to as “the king of dates,” it was once reserved for Moroccan royalty. Luckily, it is now available widely to the rest of us,

thanks to growers in Israel, California, and other warm climates.

If you want to make a real splash, try incorporating these dates into a special Tu B'Shvat dinner. And what better way than to use them in a recipe that our Moroccan cousins have been preparing for centuries. They are the perfect ingredient for this recipe that calls for other traditional North African ingredients, such as almonds, ginger, cumin, turmeric, and cinnamon that bring sweetness and texture to the dish.

Conjure up an atmospheric Middle Eastern night as you prepare this dish for the holiday. Happy Tu B'Shvat!

INGREDIENTS

6 chicken breasts

1 T. flour

1 T extra-virgin olive oil

10 large garlic cloves, peeled

3 cinnamon sticks

1½ t. ground ginger

1 t. ground cumin

½ t. turmeric

1/8 t. cayenne pepper

3 c. chicken broth

5 T. fresh lemon juice, divided

12 dates, pitted and halved, preferably Medjool

¼ c. almonds, toasted and chopped

¼ c. fresh parsley, chopped

STEPS

1. Sprinkle chicken breasts with salt, pepper, and flour.
2. Heat olive oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat.
3. Add half the chicken to pot and cook until browned on all sides, turning occasionally, about 15 minutes.
4. Transfer chicken to baking sheet or platter and repeat with the remaining chicken.
5. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the fat from the pot and discard.
6. Reduce heat to medium.
7. Add garlic cloves to the pot and sauté until golden, about 6 minutes.
8. Add cinnamon sticks, ginger, cumin, turmeric, and cayenne.
9. Stir until fragrant for about 1 minute.
10. Increase heat to high and add broth and 3 tablespoons of the lemon juice.
11. Bring to boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer until the garlic begin to soften, about 15 minutes.
12. Place chicken on top of garlic in the pot and bring to boil over medium heat.
13. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for about 25 minutes.
14. Transfer chicken and garlic to platter; cover with foil. Place in cold oven and set to 250 degrees to keep warm while sauce is cooking.
15. Boil juices in pot until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Stir in dates and the remaining 2 tablespoons lemon juice.
16. Reduce heat and simmer gently until dates are heated through, about 2 minutes.
17. Pour sauce and dates over chicken. Sprinkle with almonds and parsley, and serve on a bed of couscous.



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