



Turkish Bulgur Pilaf with Lamb & Chickpeas

- 4 tbl unsalted butter
- 1 lbs lamb shoulder, trimmed of fat and gristle, cut into ½ inch cubes
- 1 cup thinly sliced yellow onion
- 2 fresh Anaheim chiles, halved lengthwise, seeds and ribs removed, then sliced thinly crosswise
- 2 cups coarse bulgur (No. 4)
- 1 cup cooked chickpeas (rinsed if canned)
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 ½ tsp toasted and ground cumin seeds (after toasting, grind in mortar/pestle or spice grinder)
- 1 ½ tsp dried mint
- 1 ½ tsp coarsely ground medium hot red pepper, plus more for garnish

Preparation

1. In a large deep pot, melt 1 tbl butter over moderate heat. Add the lamb and brown on all sides. Add 5 cups water, bring to a simmer, then adjust the heat to maintain a simmer and cook for 45 minutes.
2. Drain meat, reserving the broth. Measure out 3 cups broth, or add water if needed to make 3 cups. Put the 3 cups broth in a small pot and keep hot.
3. Return the large pot (no need to clean it) to moderate heat and add another 1 tbl butter. Add the sliced onion and chiles and cook until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the bulgur, then add the browned lamb, hot lamb broth, chickpeas and salt. Bring to a simmer, then cover and reduce heat to low. Cook until the bulgur has absorbed all the broth and is tender, about 20 minutes. Uncover, drape a dishtowel across the top of the pot to absorb some of the steam, and replace the lid. Set aside to rest for 10 minutes.
4. Just before serving, melt the remaining 2 tbl butter in a small skillet. Add the cumin, mint, red pepper and several grinds of black pepper. Cook, stirring, for about 1 minutes to draw the fragrance out of the spices, then stir this mixture into the bulgur with a fork.
5. Season to taste with salt and transfer to a serving platter. Serve immediately.

As an alternative for the lamb and broth, get a lamb shank and neck bone from the butcher. Use this as the base for making stock, by boiling in a stock pot with onions, carrots and celery. There should be enough meat that can be stripped off the bones for this recipe, and you should get extra lamb stock to be used for another recipe. (It freezes just fine.) If you do this, just brown the lamb as in Step 1, then remove the lamb and go straight to Step 3, using 3 cups of the previously made stock.

Yields 4 – 6 servings.

This recipe goes great with a nicely balanced Zinfandel: not too much fruit/jam, not too many tannins, something that will handle the simultaneous strength and subtlety of the lamb, cumin, peppers, mint and onions.

Adapted from a recipe from the San Francisco Chronicle, 14 January 2009.