

Dinari Delicious



Flavours from the kitchen of **Villa Dinari**



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He who eats when he is full, digs his
grave with his teeth

(Moroccan proverb)



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The Moroccan Stockpot

When the camel trains of up to twelve thousand animals undertook the arduous journey across the Sahara Desert from Timbuktu to the trading post of Marrakech they carried with them three highly prized commodities; gold, slaves and spices, each to be sold in their allotted market behind the rose red walls of the Medina.

Arab traders brought cinnamon, ginger, paprika, saffron, cumin, and turmeric, still the basis of Moroccan cuisine, along with dried fruits and bread making. They enhanced the traditional Berber style of one-pot cooking that blended local ingredients such as oranges and lemons from Fez, saffron from Tiliouine, the southern provinces provided figs, dates, almonds and the curiously nutty argan oil, while mint and olives came from Meknes, where the city of Volubulis, the most southern expansion of the Roman Empire, overlooked vast olive groves, planted to supply the insatiable appetite of the empire for high quality fruit and oil. Cooked with lamb, poultry or pigeon, these layered ingredients enhanced the flavour of the traditional dishes of these nomadic tribes.

While Arab cuisine, with its love of sweet-and-sour cooking learned from the Persians, may have had a major influence on what we now know as Moroccan gastronomy, the flavours of other conquistadors added to the bubbling stockpot of North African fare; the Ottoman Empire introduced barbeque, mainly in the form of kebabs; the preserving techniques of the Jewish population bequeathed preserved lemons, without which there would be no sublime poulet au citron; returning Moors expelled from Spain by King Ferdinand (in 1492, the same year as Columbus sailed the ocean blue), introduced the decadence of the pastilla, a heavenly filo pastry parcel of pigeon and almonds; the short-lived French Protectorate of the twentieth century brought café society, patisseries and wine, while the British brought with them the glue that cements the whole of Moroccan culture – tea – although the locals adapted it to their own tastes by forgoing milk and using mint and other herbs instead. With experimentation and elaboration in the kitchens of the four Imperial Cities – Fez, Rabat, Meknes and Marrakech – Moroccan cuisine as we know it today was born, although a new breed of chef has added a sophistication unknown a decade or so ago.

A Family Affair

A Moroccan meal is a very communal affair, often beginning with a variety of salads, both cooked and uncooked. Unlike the orderly laid out rings of sliced vegetables found on a European plate, a cold Moroccan salad is usually served in a bowl with finely diced cucumber, green pepper, onions and tomatoe, liberally sprinkled with olive oil and chopped coriander. Warm salads, really a side dish in their own right, might include *zaalouk*, made with aubergines, tomatoes, garlic olive oil and spices, *chakchouka*, eggs poached in a sauce of tomatoes, chili peppers, and onions, often spiced with cumin, or *bakoula*, mallow leaves (a type of spinach) chopped and steamed, then sauteed with olive oil, spices, olives and preserved lemons. Warm salads are usually eaten as a dip with chunks of Moroccan bread.

Instead of salads the meal might begin with *bissara*, a rich, pale green soup of broad beans, garlic and olive oil, or *harira*, a flavoursome tomatoe and beef flavoured soup that traditionally breaks the fast during Ramadan.

The main course might well be a tajine, which, like paella, the iconic rice dish of Spain that takes its name from the flat metal pan in which it is cooked, is called after the clay dish with a conical top that allows the steam to rise, condense and drip back down to the stew. There are almost no limits to what can go into a tajine; meat or fish, often flavoured with dried fruit and nuts such as prunes, apricots, and almonds, and carefully guarded blends of spices. Its leisurely cooking makes sure that the flavours combine to produce a rich but subtle dish, shared by the family from the same pot, scooped up with the ubiquitous chunks of bread.

Another favourite is couscous, with a base of semolina (granules of durum wheat) over which a stew is spooned. Traditionally served on Fridays with a stew comprised of seven vegetables. And curiously, given their supposed gourmand appetites, the third favourite meal of French people in their home country.

Cakes and pastries, such as *kaab el ghzal* (gazelle's horns), a pastry stuffed with almond paste and topped with sugar, are popular in Morocco, often flavoured with rose water or orange water, honey and cinnamon, although most families will finish their meal with fresh fruit and a glass of mint tea.

The Spice Cabinet

Ginger (*skingbir*)

Spicy and fragrant ground ginger, derived from ginger root, is used extensively in tagines, stews and soups. It comes from the same family as turmeric and cardamom.

Pepper (*libzar*)

Both black and white pepper are the dried berries of the piper nigrum plant, but in the case of white pepper only the kernel is used. Black pepper has the more pungent flavour and is used widely in Moroccan cooking. Sweeter Moroccan sauces using onions and saffron would usually use the white variety.

Coarse Salt (*mellah*)

Almost all Moroccan cooking uses coarse salt, the finer version being served at table. One of the major products exchanged for the spices, gold and slaves brought to Marrakech, salt is still produced in the same salt pans at Ouirgane in the High Atlas as it was over a thousand years ago.

Cumin (*kamoun*)

Possibly the most important seasoning in Moroccan cuisine, aromatic cumin adds a faintly bitter note. It is found served at every Moroccan table along with salt and pepper.

Paprika (*tahmira*)

Made from dried bell pepper, paprika is excellent with eggs, meat, fish, potatoes and sauces, and its bright red colour makes a pleasing garnish. Sweet or hot, it is used in many dishes, the latter variety obviously adding a more spicy flavour.

Cinnamon (*karfa*)

Most commonly used in pastries and sweeter dishes, cinnamon in either bark or ground form can also add an aromatic touch to dishes with chicken, lamb or rice. It is also used in harira, the rich tomatoe-based soup that forms an integral part of the evening meal during Ramadan.

Coriander (*kasbour*)

Coriander in both seed and powder form is a mild spice with hints of sage. It works well in marinades.

Saffron Threads (*zaafrane beldi*)

The world's most expensive spice by weight is fortunately quite a bit cheaper in Morocco than almost anywhere else. Made from the cultivated stigmas of the saffron crocus flower, only a few threads will add a distinctive, slightly bitter flavour as well as a delicate yellow colour to the dish.

Turmeric (*kharkoum*),

Often used instead of saffron to provide a yellow colouring to rice and other dishes, turmeric has a warm, earthy flavour and can be combined quite well with fish and sauces. It is an ingredient in mustard and curry powder.

Ras El Hanout

Translated from Arabic, *Ras el Hanout* means 'head of the shop', which is meant to imply that it is a mixture of the best on offer by a particular shopkeeper, who will work to his own particular blend. It is said to contain up to forty spices, (called *lamrozziya*), but the most common will usually include cinnamon, cumin, cardamom, ground chili peppers, coriander, paprika, peppercorn, fenugreek, clove, turmeric, nutmeg, anise, mace, ginger, various peppers, and turmeric, creating a slightly hotter blend.

Parsley and **cilantro** (*maadnous* and *qsbour*) are the most commonly used herbs in Moroccan cuisine and will be found in almost every dish. They will almost always be bought together in Moroccan souks.

The tangy flavour of **preserved lemons** add piquancy to a number of Moroccan dishes. Not always as readily available as most of the herbs and spices needed for Moroccan cooking, they are very easy to prepare.

The liquorice savour of **anise**, sweet and spicy tang of **nutmeg**, and nutty taste of **sesame seeds** are found mainly in baking, enhanced by the essence of **rose** and **orange blossom water**.

And, of course, **mint** (*liqama*), prepared with Chinese gunpowder tea to create the emblematic drink of Moroccan hospitality, mint tea, or, as it is sometimes jokingly referred to, 'Moroccan Whiskey'.



It's the eye that eats





Vegetable Briouat



Starter

Ingredients

finely chopped onion
5 cloves of garlic
½ teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon fresh finely chopped parsley
and coriander
1 pinch cumin
½ teaspoon paprika
salt and pepper
½ teaspoon ginger
1 carrot
1 potato,
½ aubergine
½ red bell pepper
cup of green beans
cup of peas
olive oil
1 egg, beaten

Makes 36

Preparation

Finely chop all vegetables (except the peas)
Preheat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
Heat the oil in a pan.
Cook the vegetables for about 10 mins until
softened.
Stir in the spices and season.

To create pastry parcels:

Cut the pastry sheets into three lengthways and
then each strip in half crossways.
Place a heaped teaspoon of vegetables in the
bottom corner of the strip.
Fold over to make a triangle and then continue
folding so you end up with what looks like a little
samosa.
Seal the parcel with a little beaten egg
Brush with oil and put on a baking sheet.
Bake for about 15 minutes until golden.



45 minutes



15 mins

Chicken Pastilla



Ingredients

8 sheet of filo pastry (trimmed to size)
1 chicken
1 onion
5 cloves of garlic
1/2 kg of almonds
10 Eggs
2 tbsp coriander & parsley
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp salt
1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp Cinnamon
1 cup olive oil
Butter

Preparation

Preheat the oven gas mark 6 (180 ° C).
Finely slice the onions. Cut chicken into small strips. Chop the parsley and coriander.
In a frying pan, sauté the onions in a little olive oil. Add chicken, salt and pepper. Add spices and cook, stirring often for about 10 minutes, until the meat is cooked.
Peel and chop the almonds and roast them in a pan for 5 minutes on low heat.
Spread a sheet of pastry on work surface, brush with melted butter. Arrange 2 tablespoons of stuffing and a tablespoon of crushed almonds in the centre.
Fold the ends of the sheet to the centre.
Place the pastry on a baking sheet (lined with parchment paper) the folded side down.
Brush with melted butter and bake pastillas for about 15 minutes.
Remove from oven and decorate with a dusting of icing sugar, cinnamon and the rest of the crushed almonds.
Serve hot or warm.



45 minutes



1 hour

Courgette Salad

Ingredients

1/2 Kg courgette (diced)
2 cloves of garlic
Parsley + coriander
pepper
cumin
paprika
salt
1 tablespoon of olive oil

Serves four

Preparation

Heat cooking oil and then add the courgette, spices, salt, parsley, coriander, minced garlic, mix well and cook on low heat for 15 minutes. Add olive oil, 5 minutes after turning off and serve warm or cold.



15 minutes



15 minutes

Carrot and Raisin Salad

Ingredients

1/2 Kg of carrot
1 clove garlic
Cinnamon powder: 1/2 teaspoon
Sugar: 1/2 teaspoon
Pepper: 1/2 teaspoon
Ginger: 1/2 teaspoon
Cumin Pinch
Salt: a pinch

Serves six

Preparation

Saute garlic, chopped onion with oil in a pan, add the diced carrots, spices and sugar

Stir everything + 1/2 glass of water. Cook for 15 minutes.

Add the raisins, cook for another 5 minutes and serve warm or cold.



15 minutes



20 minutes

Moroccan Harira



Ingredients

1 chopped onion
1 bunch fresh coriander, chopped
1 small bunch chopped parsley
100g dried chickpeas (soaked overnight
in water and skin removed, or canned
chickpeas)
½ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon ginger
½ teaspoon cumin
salt & pepper to taste
a few stalks of celery, chopped (without
leaves)
50g lentils (preferably pink)
50g of dried beans
1-2 tbsp olive oil
2 litres of water
5 large ripe tomatoes
1 tablespoons of tomato paste
juice of half a lemon (optional)
50g flour (binder to prepare for soup)

Preparation

In a casserole, put the olive oil, onion, parsley
with celery. Add lentils, chickpeas, tomatoes
and tomato concentrate and spices
Add water, cover and cook until the chickpeas
are tender
Once the chickpeas and lentils are cooked,
add the binder *(flour mixture) slowly while
continuing to stir the flour to prevent sticking to
the bottom, until you have a velvety soup (the
more you add the thicker the harira becomes)
Cook for 2 to 3 minutes over medium heat,
stirring continually.
When cooked, add chopped coriander, lemon
juice to taste.
Serve warm.

*Preparation of the binder:
Dilute the flour in water until you have a liquid
without lumps (pass through a fine sieve if
necessary)



45 minutes



1 hour

Moroccan Spicy Lentils



Ingredients

Serves 4-5

250g brown lentils
1 onion, finely chopped
3 ripe tomatoes
1 large tablespoon of tomato puree
4 cloves of garlic
1 large bunch of mixed coriander and parsley
3 tablespoon of olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tsp paprika
2 tsp cumin
Chili powder (a pinch)



15 minutes



55 mins

Preparation

In a pan sauté the onion with 2 tbsp of olive oil, stirring for 5 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, peeled, seeded and cut into small pieces, then reduce for 10 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Add the lentils, tomatoe puree, spices, whole garlic with skin and tied bouquet of parsley and coriander, cover with cold water.

Bring to a boil and then reduce heat and simmer over a low heat for 20-30 minutes

Add the remaining tbsp of olive oil and leave it on the heat for 5 to 10 minutes.

Once the lentils are cooked and soft, remove the garlic cloves, skin them and add the soft skinned garlic back into the mixture and stir well. Taste to see if extra salt, pepper or chili is needed and sprinkle a little chopped coriander and parsley on top.

Garnish with a sprig of parsley

This dish should be fairly liquid and if it appears dry, then just add a little water during the cooking time.

Serve hot as a hearty winter warmer or cold as a salad with chunks of fresh crusty bread.

Tajine of Beef, Artichokes and Peas



Main Course

Ingredients

1 kg of beef
1 kg of peas
1 kg of artichoke
1 onion
1 tomato
1 bunch each parsley & coriander
salt & pepper
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
Pinch fresh saffron
2 cloves garlic
3 tablespoons olive oil
Salt & pepper

Preparation

Heat the oil in a pan, lightly fry the pieces of meat, add salt, pepper, ginger and saffron. Mix to cover the meat. Cover with water and place lid on. Cook for 15 minutes, checking the meat occasionally, add water if necessary.

Meanwhile, clean the artichokes, leaving only the heart.

After cooking the meat for 15 minutes add the tomato, seeded and cut into four, and the bouquet garni, artichoke hearts and peas. Cover and leave on low heat for half an hour.

Serve hot decorated with artichokes and drizzled with sauce.



45 minutes



1 hour

Chicken and Lemon Tajine



Ingredients

4 chicken legs
1 onion – finely chopped
skin of half a preserved lemon – chopped
into small cubes
4 large cloves of garlic – finely chopped
½ tsp of black pepper
½ tsp of powdered ginger
½ tsp of freshly ground cumin
½ tsp of freshly ground coriander
pinch of salt (the preserved lemons are
already quite salty)
pinch of real saffron
500grams of potatoes (cut into wedges)
4 tbsp of olive oil
1 bunch of fresh coriander and parsley,
chopped
250g of pitted green or rose olives

Preparation

Wash and pat dry the chicken legs
Finely chop the onion and garlic and chop the
preserved lemon into small pieces, also finely
chop the coriander and parsley and use two
thirds of this (keep the rest for decoration at the
end)
Mix the above with all the spices and seasoning
and 2tbsp of olive oil and marinate the chicken
for at least one hour.
In a tagine or shallow pan with lid, add 2 tbsp
of olive oil and heat, then add the chicken
mixture and fry for about 10 minutes until slightly
browned. Add water to cover the chicken,
cover and cook over a low heat for a further 20
to 30 minutes until the chicken is cooked.
When chicken is cooked, remove it from the
dish and add the potato wedges. Make sure
there is enough water but do not drown the
flavours by adding too much. Cook potatoes
until tender.
Add the chicken pieces and olives at this
point and arrange the potatoes around the
chicken pieces. Once ready to serve, sprinkle
the remaining coriander and parsley over to
decorate and add some thin slices of preserved
lemon and red pepper for taste and decoration



20 minutes



30 - 40 minutes

Tajine with Lamb Shank Pears, Apricots and Almonds



Ingredients

4 small lamb shanks
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic
4 tablespoon cooking oil
1/2 teaspoon pepper:
1/2 teaspoon ginger powder
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp sugar
1/2 tsp icing sugar
A pinch of saffron
1 tsp coriander
2 pears
150 g of dried apricots
Handful of almonds



45 minutes



1 hour

Preparation

Brown the meat, garlic and onion in 2 tbsp of cooking oil. Add spices, sugar and salt and moisten with 4 cups of water. Cook on medium heat for 15 minutes (with lid on) then leave to simmer (about 1 to 1.5 hours, depending on your meat, it should be very tender and easy to pull off the bone) Once the meat is cooked, place in a tagine with the reduced liquid. There should be some sauce and if the sauce is reduced too much, then just add a little water while cooking. Put this aside and prepare the other ingredients.

Cut the pears in quarters, remove the seeds, boil in water with a pinch of salt for 15 minutes or until cooked, remove from water and drain. Put the apricots in a saucepan with 1/2 cup water and cook for 5 minutes, remove from water and drain.

Put a table spoon of oil in a frying pan, brown the pieces of pear on each side, sprinkle with cinnamon and icing sugar, remove from the pan and add the boiled apricots to the same pan for a couple of minutes to brown slightly. Fry in oil or dry fry a handful of peeled almonds and put aside until serving the tagine.

Now build your tagine by heating the meat through and carefully placing the pears and apricots around the meat. Add the tagine lid and cook for a couple of minutes

Just before serving, add the almonds, this is so they remain crunchy. Sprinkle with a little chopped coriander, then serve with some delicious French bread or couscous/rice.

If you don't have a tagine, you can prepare this in a large saucepan and serve on a pretty serving dish.

Kefta Tajine with Eggs



Ingredients

400g minced meat
4 eggs
1 medium onion
2 tomatoes
1 clove garlic
1 tbs tomato puree
1 tsp pepper
1 tsp salt
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp cumin
Ras el hanout: a pinch
Pinch parsley and coriander
One tbsp olive oil

Serves four

Preparation

Roll the meat into small balls (about 20)
Saute onion and minced garlic in olive oil for 5 minutes, add the peeled and diced tomatoes, then add the spices, 1/2 cup water and tomato paste
Cook for ten minutes, add the meatballs,
Simmer 5-7 minutes and add the whole raw eggs. Before presenting the dish, add the parsley.



20 minutes



10-15 minutes

Tangia



Ingredients

25g of butter
1tbls of olive oil
2 kilos of beef shin (you need the marrow bone)
2 onions - chopped
1 tomato (cut in 4 and leave the skin on if you like)
8 cloves of garlic – peel and leave whole
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp coriander powder
several strands of saffron
½ a preserved lemon (remove pips and inner flesh)
Salt and pepper to taste
Enough water to cover meat.

Preparation

Have the butcher chop the meat into steaks with the bone at least 5cm thick
Put all ingredients into a large saucepan or pressure cooker. Mix well and then simply cook until the meat is beautifully tender. In a pressure cooker this should take approx 1.5 hours or slow cook for several hours. If the meat is tender and the sauce is a little watery, then just remove the meat and reduce the sauce a little.
Serve on a large sharing dish and decorate with thin slices of preserved lemon and a sprinkling of fresh coriander. Serve with great hunks of fresh bread and a vegetable of your choice, rice or couscous.



15 minutes



1.30 hours depending on pan

Chicken Makful



Ingredients

1 boneless chicken leg per person
1 onion chopped finely
3 tomatoes cut across into rounds of the same thickness

Spices

1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp paprika
1 pinch of real saffron (use colouring in small quantities if you don't have this)
2 cinnamon sticks
1 tsp of cinnamon
2tsp of sugar
Salt and pepper to taste
Chopped parsley to garnish
Sunflower oil

Serves four

Preparation

Mix the spices (not the cinnamon powder or sugar) and chopped onion and 2 tbs of oil together and marinate the chicken in this mixture for 2 hours.

Heat 2 tbs oil in a tagine or large flat pan with a lid. Place the chicken with spices and lightly fry over a low heat for about 5 minutes, turning occasionally.

Cover the meat with 1½ cups water and leave to cook until tender, about 30 minutes depending on the size of the chicken.

Uncover the dish and transfer to the tagine, there should be just a little sauce at this point. Cover the chicken with whole sliced rounds of onions and then with the rounds of tomatoes. Add the cinnamon and the sugar at this point, sprinkling over the whole of the tagine.

Place the lid on the tagine and cook for a further 20 to 25 minutes, checking that the bottom does not burn and then garnish with parsley to serve.

We always serve this with rice and homemade bread.



15 minutes plus
2 hours marinade



1-1.30 hours

Calamari with Courgettes and Baby Tomatoes



Ingredients

3 courgettes
50ml (2fl oz) olive oil
750g (1½ lb) prepared squid cut into thin rings
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 red chilli, seeded and finely chopped
3 plum tomatoes, skinned, seeded and chopped
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
Salt & freshly ground black pepper

Preparation

Cut the courgette lengthways into quarters and then across into slices 1 cm (1/2 in) thick. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan, add the squid and fry over a high heat, stirring, for 2 minutes until lightly browned. Lower the heat, add the garlic, chilli and courgettes and cook gently for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, parsley and seasoning, toss together and serve with crusty bread or rice.



45 minutes



15 minutes

Medfouna



Ingredients

For the dough:

1 sachet dried yeast
175ml / 6fl oz lukewarm water
250g / 9oz plain flour, plus extra for dusting
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp caraway seeds
olive oil, for brushing
sea salt flakes, for sprinkling

For the filling:

1 onion, finely chopped
1/2 large stick celery, finely chopped
2 tbsp thyme, leaves picked and chopped
4 tbsp flatleaf parsley, chopped
1 tsp ground coriander
500g / 1lb 2oz fillet steak, finely chopped



45 minutes



1 hour

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.

For the dough, add the yeast to the warm water and mix to dissolve.

Mix the flour, salt and caraway seeds in a bowl. Add the yeast and water mixture to the flour and mix to form a dough.

On a floured work surface, knead the dough for ten minutes.

Divide the dough into two equal pieces and place in bowls.

Cover the bowls with a tea towel or cling film and leave to rise in a warm place for 30 minutes, or until the dough has doubled in size.

Meanwhile, for the filling, place the onion, celery, thyme, parsley, coriander and meat into a bowl. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper and mix well.

To make the medfouna, once the dough has risen, roll out both portions into large rounds the size of a dinner plate.

Place one of the dough rounds on a baking tray. Place the filling on top and spread evenly, leaving a 2cm/1in edge.

Brush the edge with a little water. Place the second dough round on top and press the edges gently together to seal the bread.

Brush the top with some olive oil and sprinkle lightly with sea salt flakes, taking care not to oversalt the bread.

Transfer to the oven and bake for 20-25 minutes, or until golden-brown.

Serve.

Cinnamon Oranges



Dessert

Ingredients Preparation

1 large juicy orange per person	Peel the oranges, cut into fairly thin slices but not too thin
1 tbsp caster sugar	Place them in a dish (individual dishes look nicer)
1 tsp ground cinnamon	Dribble with orange blossom water
Orange blossom water (if available)	Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar
	Chill in refrigerator
	Serve decorated with mint leaves for extra freshness



20 minutes

Olive Bread



Bread

Bread is sacred in Morocco, and tradition has it that if you drop a piece on the ground you must pick it up and kiss it. In many homes it is still forbidden to throw bread away, and in some of the older parts of the souks you will see small shops where bread is gathered and sold for animal food, although these are rare these days. One of the cornerstones of Moroccan life is the bakery, where each family sends it loaves to be baked (and the baker recognises every family's bread, and make sure it returns to whence it came). In most family homes even now, bread and fingers substitute for knife and fork, a bonus if you love wiping your plate with a chunk after you have finished your meal.

Ingredients

1 kg of wheat
250g of flour
1 tablespoon fresh yeast
150g pitted black olives
1 teaspoon salt
1 litre of warm water



45 minutes



1 hour

Preparation

Mix the yeast with a little warm water. In a bowl pour grain flour, wheat flour and salt and gradually mix the yeast with your fingers until the dough comes away from the bowl. Knead for 5 minutes, then let stand 15 minutes. Meanwhile chop the olives and then incorporate them into the dough knead 10 minutes by hand and let it double in volume. Cover and leave in a warm place at room temperature for one and half hours.

Heat the pan, spread the dough on the table and form a long or round bread, brush with olive oil. Let stand 20 minutes and cook in the frying pan. Cool on a wire rack.



Mint tea is the glue that cements Moroccan society; from the poorest hovel to the most elegant palace, the first thing that will happen when you enter is that you will be offered a glass of mint tea. If you are offered a glass already prepared, you are welcome; if your host brings out the kettle, the teapot, glasses, tea in its ornate container and a solid block of sugar, you are **very** welcome, an honoured guest, with time to chat as your host goes through the elaborate ritual of preparing 'Berber whisky'.

Mint Tea

Le premier verre est aussi doux que la vie,
le deuxième est aussi fort que l'amour,
le troisième est aussi amer que la mort.

(The first glass is as gentle as life,
the second glass is as strong as love,
the third glass is as bitter as death.)

Ingredients

1 large handful fresh mint leaves
4 teaspoons loose gunpowder green tea
75 cl of boiling water
3-4 teaspoons of sugar, depending on
taste

Serves six

Preparation

Warm the teapot with a small amount of boiling water. Discard the water.

Add the tea and about one-third of the water. Chat for a couple of minutes while the tea steeps then swirl the pot to rinse the tea. Pour water out and discard.

Add the rest of the water, mint and sugar to the pot. Leave for at least five minutes, or if you are doing it with a traditional metal tea pot, return to the heat and bring to a low simmer before removing and letting it sit for a few minutes. Pour a glass of tea, then return it to the pot. Do this at least twice more.

Begin pouring the tea, and as you do so raise the pot so the cascading liquid creates a thin foam on the top of the tea.





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