

Moroccan Lamb Tagine



Rob Tymstra—six-time winner of the Botham Cup and holder of a record 144 species in twenty-four hours—was out working in his Pelee Island yard one day in early May when he heard a Swainson's Thrush singing in a nearby woodlot. "The song was distant and it called about five times but I couldn't locate it. The fluty ethereal songs of thrushes are often somewhat ventriloquial; they seem to be able to throw their voice far from where they are. The singing stopped and I continued my raking. About an hour later, the thrush called again. Again, I could not locate it. I pride myself on being a fairly good observer and there have been few birds that I have been unable to locate eventually, but this one eluded me. While it was still singing, I decided to call a friend and pulled my smartphone out of my pocket and there it was—the Swainson's Thrush song pumping gloriously out of my cellphone speaker. I had forgotten that I assigned bird songs to my friends so I would know who was calling. Mystery solved!"

INGREDIENTS

- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 large cinnamon stick (or 1 TSP ground cinnamon)
- ¾ CUP dried chickpeas
- 2 TBSP olive oil
- 3 LBS lamb shoulder cut into 1" cubes
- Kosher or rock salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced

METHOD

Soak chickpeas overnight. Drain and pour into a sauce pan with 2 whole garlic cloves and a cinnamon stick. Add water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and simmer until chickpeas are tender, about 45 minutes. Drain and set aside. Or open a can of prepared chickpeas! (Chickpeas can be replaced with a cup of diced squash.)

Heat oil over medium-high heat in a large heavy pot (or in a traditional tagine pot). Season lamb with salt and pepper. Working in batches, brown lamb on all sides, about 4 minutes per batch. Transfer lamb to a bowl.

Reduce heat to medium-low, add onion, and sauté until soft and golden, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add minced garlic, ginger, and Ras-el-Hanout (see below). Stir for 1 minute.

Add tomatoes, tomato paste, and lamb with any accumulated juices. Bring to a boil. Add 2½ cups chicken stock. Return to a boil, reduce heat to low, partially cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until lamb is tender, about an hour and a half.

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5 TSP Ras-el-Hanout spice blend

1 TBSP peeled, minced ginger

1 CUP canned diced tomatoes

1 small can tomato paste

2½ CUPS chicken stock

½ CUP dried apricots

Steamed couscous

Chopped fresh cilantro

SERVES 6-8

Stir in chickpeas or squash. Simmer until heated through, about 10 minutes (or until squash is tender). Stir in apricots; simmer until heated through, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Make couscous: for every 2-3 people, add one cup of dry couscous to ¾ cup boiling water, turn heat off, and let sit for 5 minutes until soft.

Spoon couscous onto a large, shallow platter, forming a large well in center. Spoon tagine into center. Garnish with sprinkled cilantro.

NOTE: Freeze the leftovers and you'll have yummy future meals!

Ras-el-Hanout

1½ TSP coriander seeds

¾ TSP cumin seeds

½ TSP crushed red pepper flakes

1¼ TSP ground cinnamon

1 TSP sweet paprika

½ TSP ground cardamom

½ TSP ground ginger

½ TSP ground turmeric

This Arabic spice is a mix of as many as 50 (!) spices and is a key ingredient in this dish. If you can't find it in the store, Garam Masala makes a passable substitute, or blend your own. If you can't find all the ingredients listed, don't worry, just toss in what you have!

