



Chicken Tagine with Preserved Lemons and Olives

SERVES 6-8

One of my fondest memories of shopping in the souks of Marrakech was when I was waiting for some friends outside a leather shop and the shopkeeper offered me his stool to sit on. After accepting I spotted a small tagine set over a portable burner on the floor. Noticing my curiosity, the shopkeeper removed the lid so I could take a peek. The aromas of ginger and lemon that wafted from that little clay vessel captured my senses like a spell. Inside were two pieces of chicken simmering in a savory golden citrusy sauce, and I knew I had to bring this moment home. The gentleman graciously offered to share a portion of his lunch when he saw my obvious delight in his simmering tagine. I declined but later learned to make chicken tagine with preserved lemons in Fatima's Berber kitchen. At home I make my own preserved lemons, a task that takes a few minutes, but they must be kept in a jar for at least 4 weeks before using. Preserved lemons have a more mellow and fermented flavor than fresh lemons, and they give a depth of flavor to chicken tagine that is simply divine. If you don't make your own preserved lemons you can purchase them in specialty stores or online.

INGREDIENTS

Chicken Tagine:

6-8 chicken thighs
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
2 preserved lemons, cut into strips
1 cup green olives, pitted and halved
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

Marinade:

1 onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, grated
1 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon saffron threads
freshly squeezed juice of one lemon
1 teaspoon salt
4 teaspoons olive oil

PROCESS:

Marinade:

In a bowl, mix together the ingredients for the marinade. Add the chicken and cover with plastic wrap.



Place bowl in refrigerator for at least 2 hours, and up to 4 hours.

Chicken Tagine:

Heat olive oil and butter in a tagine or large Dutch oven over medium high heat. Remove chicken from marinade and pat dry with paper towels. Sear the chicken in the oil and butter until browned on all sides. Add the remaining marinade and enough water to come halfway up the sides of the chicken pieces. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce to a simmer for 45 minutes. Add the preserved lemon, olives, thyme, and oregano. Cover and simmer for another 15 minutes. Taste to see if more seasonings are needed and serve warm.