



Spicy Chicken Tagine with Apricots and Preserved Lemons

SERVES 8

The tagine is a Moroccan cooking vessel with a conical lid for slowly cooking stews. Tagine is also the name of the stew inside. The lid allows the liquid inside to steam and drip down the sides, making a tender and moist stew. Many tagines have the addition of preserved lemons, which are lemons preserved in salt and their own juice. I make my own preserved lemons, allowing them to sit in a jar for months to transform into a deep and tangy flavor, unlike the tart and bright flavor of fresh lemons. If you don't want to make your own, you can purchase them at most international grocers or online. The addition of dried apricots and fresh ginger makes this tagine an intense stew with every flavor component: sweet, sour, bitter, and salty.

Moroccans serve couscous as its own dish, often with roasted vegetables, but I sometimes serve it underneath this tagine to absorb all the juices.

INGREDIENTS

CHICKEN MARINADE:

- 1 onion, minced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons salt 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 8 chicken thighs, (boneless, skin on)

STEW:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, chopped

- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, chopped
- 2 green chiles, minced (serrano or jalapeño)
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 cup dried apricots
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 cup tomatoes, diced
- 2 preserved lemons, sliced thinly
- salt and black pepper
- 1/3 cup basil leaves, torn

PROCESS:



In a medium bowl, combine the marinade ingredients and add chicken thighs. Stir to coat the chicken. Cover and refrigerate for 1-2 hours. Meanwhile, heat the butter in a tagine or heavy Dutch oven pan over medium high heat. Sauté onions until soft, about 8 minutes; then add rosemary, ginger, green chiles, and cinnamon sticks.

Remove chicken from marinade, and pat dry with paper towels. Add to the pan and brown on both sides, about 5 minutes on each side. Stir in the apricots, honey, tomatoes, lemon, 2 teaspoons of salt, and a few grinds of black pepper. Add enough water to cover the bottom of the tagine (or pan). Bring liquid to a boil, then reduce heat to medium low and cover. Simmer for 40 minutes. Taste to see if more salt and pepper is needed, Sprinkle with torn basil leaves. Serve with couscous or rice, if desired.