

Bisteeya, Tetuán Style

This is the *bisteeya* known to the old lady from Tetuán who was shocked at the Fez variation. In the north the people prefer the dish more tart than sweet.

Note that you have the option of adding a small amount of preserved lemons—an addition I highly recommend if you have them on hand, but one that is not absolutely necessary.

This dish will work out best if you perform steps 1 through 4 the morning of the day the *bisteeya* is to be served: the better the eggs are drained, the better the *bisteeya* will be—crispy on the outside and moist within.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 pounds chicken parts, with giblets
- 5 cloves garlic (approximately), peeled
- Salt
- 1 cup grated onion
- 2 good pinches pulverized saffron
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 large cinnamon sticks
- 11 tablespoons sweet butter
- 2 large Spanish onions, quartered and thinly sliced lengthwise (about 4 cups)
- 1½ cups chopped parsley
- ½ cup lemon juice
- 8 to 10 eggs, well beaten
- 1½ preserved lemons (optional; see page 30)
- ½ to ¾ pound phyllo pastry or strudel leaves or 40 *warka* leaves (page 103)
- Ground cinnamon

EQUIPMENT

- 5½-quart cast-iron enameled casserole with cover
- Colander
- Mixing bowls
- Paring knife
- Small saucepan
- Towel
- 12- or 13-inch cake pan, pizza pan, or paella pan
- Pastry brush
- Baking sheet (at least 12 inches wide)
- Spatula
- Serving plate

Working time: 1½ hours

Cooking time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Baking time: 20 minutes

Serves: 12 (as part of a Moroccan dinner)

1. Prepare the poultry with the garlic and salt as described on page 109.
2. Place the rinsed and drained poultry in the casserole with giblets, grated onion, 1 pinch of the saffron, the spices, and 6 tablespoons of the butter. Pour in 1½ cups water. Add salt to taste and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer 1 hour, covered.
3. Remove the chicken, giblets, cinnamon sticks, and any loose bones from the casserole. By boiling rapidly, uncovered, reduce the sauce to about 1 cup. Add the sliced onions, parsley, more pinches of pepper and saffron, and a few tablespoons water. Cook uncovered, stirring often, until the onions are soft and reduced to a thick mass.
4. Add the lemon juice and eggs and continue cooking until the eggs become curdy and dry. Transfer this mixture to a colander set over a bowl and let drain all day if possible. Reserve the liquid.
5. Shred the chicken into chunks and discard all the bones.
6. Rinse the preserved lemons and discard pulp. Dice the peel and set aside.
7. Heat the remaining butter. When the foam subsides, pour off the clear liquid into a small bowl, leaving the milky solids. *Up to this point the recipe can be prepared in advance.*
8. Preheat the oven to 425°.
9. Unroll the pastry leaves and place them under a damp towel to prevent them from drying out. Cover the bottom of the cake pan with half the pastry leaves, overlapping as directed in step 7 on page 109. Every few layers of pastry should be moistened with 2 tablespoons of the lemon-egg liquid (in place of the melted butter used in the previous recipe).
10. Place chunks of chicken and giblets around the inner edges of pan and then work toward the center so that pastry is covered with a layer of poultry. Cover this layer with one of onions and eggs. Sprinkle with the preserved lemon peel and about ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon.
11. Cover with the remaining pastry leaves, brushing the remaining lemon-egg liquid on each, but without using more than 3 tablespoons. Fold the leaves as directed in step 11 on page 110. Dribble the clarified butter over the top and sides of the pie.
12. Bake as directed in steps 12 and 13 on page 110 and serve at once, with a mild dusting of ground cinnamon.