



RECIPE OF THE WEEK: 24/01/2022

Moujendra (Green Lentil and Rice Pilaf)

Moujendra or mouchentra is similar to megadama in Syria and mudardara in Lebanon. The medieval Arabic dish, mujadarra was described as a dish for the poor and is still known as Esau's favourite. Esau liked the dish so much that he sold his birthright for it. Moujendra is a dish prepared in all of Cyprus, especially in my birthplace, Paphos. My mother used to make it often because of the abundance of lentils after the harvest. It was usually served with yoghurt, roasts or as an accompaniment to any main course.

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

300g green or brown lentils
175ml vegetable stock, optional
75g long grain rice, washed and drained
6 tbsp olive oil
2 medium onions, sliced thinly
50g crusty bread cut into 1cm cubes (croutons), optional
3 tbsp good quality red wine vinegar or lemon juice
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper



Method

1. Wash the lentils in a colander until cold running water and drain.
2. Put the lentils in a pan of cold salted water, just enough to cover and bring to the boil. When they start to boil, replace with fresh water. Add the vegetable stock, if using. Again, bring the lentils to the boil and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender, skimming from time to time.
3. Add the rice, cover the pan and bring it back to the boil. Simmer gently for 15-20 minutes, until the rice is soft and well cooked, adding a little more water if absorbed too quickly.
4. Over a medium heat, heat half of the olive oil in a heavy frying pan until hot but not smoking and fry the sliced onion and croutons, if using, for 2-3 minutes until the onions are golden and caramelised.
5. Stir the onions and croutons if using, the remainder of the olive oil and vinegar or lemon juice into the cooked rice and lentils, and season to taste.
6. Cover the pan with a thick cloth and place the lid over the cloth to steam the rice and make it fluffy. Stir the pilaf with a fork, just before serving. Serve hot with tuna and olives.