

## Chicken, Olive and Preserved Lemon Tagine with Herbed Couscous

This dish is sure to make the rounds at dinner parties or Sunday suppers once you try it. Braised chicken thighs succumb to the olives and preserved lemons and bask in a succulent sauce, begging for couscous. While a tagine is a beautiful piece of useful crockery to display, a large skillet or braiser with a tight-fitting lid, or even a Dutch oven, will work just as well. Jarred preserved lemons can be found at gourmet shops and Middle Eastern grocers. They're also easy to make at home but require a bit of time to cure. You can't go wrong with this dish.

See Cook's Note on how to make your own ras el hanout.

### Ingredients

#### chicken

- 1 whole preserved lemon
- 1 tablespoon ras el hanout or tagine seasoning (see Cook's Note on how to make your own)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional, if your seasoning mix doesn't include it)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 8 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (2½ to 3 pounds)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 large onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon saffron threads, toasted (optional) and crumbled
- 1½ cups chicken stock
- 6 ounces green olives, such as Castelvetrano or Cerignola
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

#### couscous

- 1½ cups chicken stock or water
- 1½ cups couscous
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra if needed
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

#### special equipment

12-inch heavy skillet with a tight-fitting lid or braiser (preferably something presentable you can bring to the table) or wide, shallow Dutch oven

### Directions

#### *for the chicken*

Scrape out the flesh of the lemon and set aside. Thinly slice the peel. Remove and discard any pits and chop the lemon flesh into a paste (about 2 tablespoons).

Mix the lemon paste with the ras el hanout, cinnamon, if using, and 1 tablespoon of the oil. Season the chicken lightly with salt and pepper and then rub all over with the lemon-spice mixture. If you have the time, cover and let marinate, refrigerated, for 4 hours or up to overnight. Bring to room temperature 30 minutes before cooking.

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Drizzle the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil into the pan. Working in batches, sear the chicken, skin side down, until nicely browned, about 3 minutes. Flip and sear the other side until browned, about 2 minutes. Set aside on a plate as done. Add the onions to the pan and toss in the oil to coat, scraping up any brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Cook until the onions are slightly wilted, about 2 minutes. Stir in the garlic, saffron and chicken stock. Season lightly with salt and pepper, and bring to a simmer. Return the chicken and any accumulated juices to the skillet, nestling the thighs into the onions, skin-side up. Scatter the lemon peels and olives around the chicken. Cover and simmer until the chicken is cooked through and tender, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a plate. Continue to simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the cooking liquid is thick and saucy, 8 to 10 minutes. Return the chicken to the pan, sprinkle with parsley, and serve with couscous.

### ***for the couscous***

When the chicken is almost done cooking, bring the chicken stock or water to a boil in a wide pot. Remove from heat, stir the couscous and olive oil into the liquid and cover tightly. Let sit undisturbed for 5 minutes to steam. Uncover and use a fork to fluff the couscous. Stir in cilantro and parsley and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with the chicken.

### **Cook's Notes**

Ras el hanout is a classic Moroccan seasoning that varies greatly from region to region, spice shop to spice shop, and household to household. Some mixes have only a handful of heady spices while others can include more than 30 ingredients. Of late, ras el hanout has become more accessible (even McCormick makes their own version!) in regular supermarkets and gourmet markets. If you can't find any, you can throw one together yourself: combine 1½ teaspoons paprika, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, 1 teaspoon ground ginger, 1 teaspoon ground turmeric, 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, 1/2 teaspoon cayenne, 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander, 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin, 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg, and a pinch each of ground cardamom and ground cloves. Store in a tightly sealed jar or container.

**total time:** 1 hour 30 minutes, plus optional marinating time

**active prep:** 10 minutes

**serves:** 4 to 6

**difficulty:** easy to moderate

