



“When I went to uni, I worked in the college bar and dining room. Between my first and second years it went through a bit of a rebrand. Out went soggy burgers and rock-hard jacket potatoes, and in came amazing cuisine from around the world.

One of the best dishes on the menu was Tunisian lamb stew. It was a **rich and sweet dish, filled with delicious tender meat and fruit** which melted into what was a thick and unctuous sauce. It was on the rotating menu once a fortnight, and I always made sure to be there that day.

I even asked the chef for the recipe, which he not only hand wrote for me, but also scaled down the catering sized quantities for the home chef. Sadly, I lost that recipe a long time ago, but the memories of the meal have stayed with me.

Sabrina Ghayour includes a similar recipe in her *Persiana Everyday* cookbook. So, the recipe is inspired by both versions and my own tinkering.

The truth is, if you cook the lamb slowly for a long time, then you can pick and choose the herbs, spices and fruit to your own taste. The uni version included dates and apricots, so they both feature here. But plums and prunes would also work. The sweetness is softened by the strength of the lamb and the slow cooking.”



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INGREDIENTS

800g - 1kg lamb (I used shoulder, but neck or slow cooked leg would also work)

1 large onion, sliced

4 garlic cloves, crushed

1 tin whole tomatoes

2 tsp finely chopped or grated ginger

2 bay leaves

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp ground coriander

1 tsp turmeric

½ tsp cinnamon

½ tsp cloves (to taste)

1 tsp sweet paprika

6 large dates, chopped (I used medjool)

12 dried apricots, chopped

A generous squeeze of honey or pomegranate molasses (or other sweetener)

Salt and pepper (to taste)

Olive oil



TUNISIAN LAMB STEW

"I LOVE TRYING NEW THINGS OUT AND THEN SHARING THESE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. SOMETIMES I FOLLOW A RECIPE, OTHER TIMES I HEAD OFF-PISTE"



METHOD

1. In a casserole, fry your onion in olive oil for a few minutes until soft. Add the garlic and ginger and cook for another 1-2 minutes.
2. Add your spices, stir and cook for another minute until fragrant, adding a little water if it's too dry.
3. At this point, brown your lamb meat. You want this cut into bite-size chunks. Slightly larger is better because the slow cooking will ensure the meat melts away.
4. Stir and season the dish. Add the honey, dates, apricots and tomatoes. Use a wooden spoon to break these up a little if you prefer.
5. Bring the dish to the boil and then reduce the temperature and leave it to simmer.
6. Put a lid on the dish and then leave it for the magic to happen. The longer you have to do this, the better, but I'd suggest at least 75 minutes.
7. If you prefer, you can do this in the oven at a temperature of about 140-160c.
8. I serve the dish with some cous cous jewelled with raisins, but it'd work with mash or rice or even on a jacket potato.
9. Once ready, remove the bay leave. Garnish generously with your favourite green herb – I'm a coriander man, but parsley would work just as well. Flaked almonds also work well on top – they bring a welcome contrast to your Instagram pictures too.
10. If you have the time, why not make some eastern side dishes or homemade breads to accompany the fragrant stew?