

☒ After the thunder storms a couple of weeks ago our apricot tree is shedding an early harvest of slightly battered looking fruits. They are fine to eat and essentially ripe, they just look slightly worse for wear. So armed with several pounds of slightly misshaped fruit it's time to find a recipe and here it is:-

Ingredients:-

1kg diced lamb shoulder
2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp ground cumin
2 tsp ground turmeric
1 tbsp sweet paprika
1 tsp hot paprika
2 tbsp olive oil
3 onions
4 cloves of garlic
60g sultanas
2 tbsp honey
1 tsp saffron stamens
750ml stock
2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
350g apricots
a preserved lemon
a handful of coriander leaves
a handful of sliced almonds
a small handful of mint leaves

Method:-

Mix the cubed lamb in half the ground spices and leave for at least four hours. Overnight would be ideal.

Set the oven at 160C/gas mark 3. Warm the olive oil in a deep, heavy-based casserole or tagine if you have one and add the seasoned meat in small batches. Remove when it is browned nicely on

all sides. Peel and roughly chop the onions, then peel and finely slice the garlic. Add to the pan with the remaining spices and allow to soften and colour lightly. Stir regularly over a moderate heat so that the spices flavour the onions but do not burn.

Add the sultanas, honey, saffron stamens, stock, tomatoes and apricots, then return the meat to the pan. Bring to the boil, season with salt and black pepper, then cover with a lid and place in the oven. Cook for two and a half hours.

Cut the preserved lemon in half and discard the interior pulp. Finely chop the skin and stir into the tagine. Lift out the meat with a draining spoon and boil the sauce over a high heat until it is reduced and thick, then stir in the roughly torn coriander and mint leaves. Return the meat to the sauce and serve. Sprinkle the almonds and serve.

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