

North Africa

*Morocco, Tunisia,
and Algeria*

Olives Stuffed with Ground Beef in a Spicy Ragout

Marquit Zeitoun

Lamb Kebabs, Marrakech Style, with Spicy Chile Paste

Al Kotban Mrakchiya

Baked Fennel Bulbs Stuffed with Lamb

Bisbas Michchi

Phyllo Rolls with Two Fillings (Fatima's Little Fingers)

Maasems (Doigts de Fatma)

Phyllo Triangles with Quail, Eggs, Onions, and Spices

Briouat el B'stila (Braewat el Bisteeya)

Grilled Tuna Kebabs with Herb-Lemon Marinade

Thon bi Chermoula (Tchermila)

**Rice-Stuffed Dates Wrapped in Sole with
Sweet and Sour Sauce**

Samak Mehshi bi Tamr

THE COUNTRIES OF MOROCCO, Tunisia, and Algeria, because of their indigenous people, history, and unique geographical position, have a culinary tradition quite different from the rest of the African continent. These three countries are known as the Maghreb from the Arabic for “the land farthest west.” Two thousand years ago the three countries were one. Cooking in the Maghreb has been influenced by the Persians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Vandals, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, Spanish, British, and French. Spices from the Far East and Middle East passed across this region, and there was an exchange of produce between Europe and North Africa. The Romans made this region the “breadbasket” of its empire, and the Maghreb supplied the empire with more than 60 percent of the wheat and other grains it needed to feed its people and its armies. The Moors brought citrus and olives back to North Africa from Spain, forever leaving a Mediterranean imprint on the cuisines of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.

Dried sausages were introduced to the northern Coast of Africa by the Phoenicians (this drying technique was used to preserve meats for long sea journeys). The Carthaginians are thought to have introduced durum wheat in the form of semolina, which became the staple of the region, couscous. It is believed that the North Africans developed a way to dry pasta made from semolina, a precursor of the dried pasta so appreciated in Italy. When the Romans expelled the Carthaginians, they named the region Mauretania Tingitana (it is from this name that the term “Moors” about). The most lasting effect on the region came in the year 683, when Morocco was invaded by the Arabs. The Arabs brought their religion and the culture of the Middle East to a people known as the Berbers, an indigenous Caucasian tribe, possibly of Nordic descent. While they did adopt the Muslim religion, they formed a specialized branch that mainstream Muslims considered heresy, a split that keeps the two cultures in conflict to this day.

The Arabs were the world’s spice merchants for many centuries and they introduced cinnamon, saffron, ginger, cloves, and nutmeg to North Africa. The Arabs went on to conquer Spain in 711. Known as the Moors, they kept North Africa connected to Spain for centuries. This helped to fuse the ingredients of the Mediterranean with those of the Maghreb. When the Spanish Moors and Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, many chose to settle in Morocco, and they brought their cuisines with them. The Ottoman Turks were repelled from ever crossing into Moroccan territory, and so the Ottoman Empire did not have as much influence on the cuisine of Morocco as it did elsewhere. Portuguese and Spanish influence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries introduced the region to the New World. Chiles and tomatoes had a powerful impact on the tastes of the Maghreb. Tunisian cuisine became the spiciest of the three countries (harissa is the fiery chile condiment for which

Tunisia has become famous). France had annexed Algeria in 1834, and at the beginning of the twentieth century Britain struck a deal with France: the French could keep control over Morocco in exchange for British control in Egypt. The French influence in the region was greatest in Algeria, but it provided an elegance in presentation of food in all of the countries in North Africa.

There is a Maghrebi proverb to the effect that Algeria is the man, Tunisia is the woman, and Morocco is the lion. The food of Morocco certainly lives up to this analogy. Moroccan cuisine is assertive and aggressive, with liberal use of a multitude of spices. Only India can compare in its copious use of multiple-spice combinations. It is spice that characterizes Moroccan food. Brought to Morocco from India and elsewhere were ginger, turmeric, saffron, black peppercorns, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, paprika, and garlic. A surprising spice to be found in the region is caraway, normally associated with foods of northern Europe. Moroccan cuisine is a Mediterranean cuisine, with reliance on lemons, olives, olive oil, and garlic. Persian influence can be seen in Morocco's taste for meats combined with fruits and the use of "sweet" spices in savory dishes. Flaky pastries (*b'stilla*), filled with meat and spices are often dusted with powdered sugar and cinnamon. Sweet dates and raisins are combined with lamb and chicken.

The staple in Morocco (and across the region) is couscous, a unique pasta made from durum wheat. It may be flavored with butter, spices, vegetables, and meats. It can be served alone or accompanied by a rich tagine. *Tagines* are wonderfully flavorful stews, slowly cooked in a special ceramic cooking vessel. Couscous is often steamed by placing it over a simmering *tagine*, with the flavors of the stew infused into the small pasta kernels. Favorite meats include lamb, beef, and poultry, with a fondness for pigeon or squab. With a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, fish is quite popular. Sardines are especially enjoyed throughout the Maghreb.

Algeria is one of the largest countries in Africa, yet 90 percent of the land lies in the Sahara Desert. At the same time, 90 percent of the population lives along the Mediterranean, in what is known as the Tell region. These northern regions have suffered from deforestation, overgrazing, and erosion. Farming accounts for little more than 10 percent of the gross national product of Algeria. France annexed Algeria in the early 1800s. Because of its long association with France, modern Algerian cuisine is most like the French in its care of presentation and preparation. Algerian cuisine can be seen as the intermediary between the highly aromatic and fruit-filled dishes of Morocco and the use of fiery chiles (as *harisa*) in Tunisia. Algerians have a fondness for salads that surpasses the other countries of the Maghreb. Unusual vegetables such as artichokes, fennel, and cardoons are eaten along

with the more common carrots, tomatoes, and potatoes. Flat-leaf parsley is added to most dishes and caraway is a surprise note in the spice spectrum of the region. Lamb is the most common meat, since sheep can thrive in semiarid conditions. Poultry and fish are enjoyed as well.

Tunisia was an important wheat-growing region from the time of the Roman Empire. Because of this early history, dishes based on couscous are extremely popular, and Tunisian bakeries produce wonderful breads. Unlike Algeria, Tunisia's northern regions are quite fertile and have plant life similar to that of southern Europe. Grape vines flourish in this Mediterranean climate. Mediterranean crops such as oranges, lemons, figs, grapes, and pomegranates also flourish in the rich soil and balmy climate of the northern lands. The history of Tunisia is similar to that of the rest of the region, with one exception. The Phoenicians established Carthage in an area now known as Tunis. The Carthaginian Empire ruled the Iberian Peninsula and parts of Sicily and Sardinia intermittently until the Punic Wars (149 to 146 B.C.). This interaction cemented the influence of the Mediterranean on the cooking style and crops grown in modern Tunisia. In addition to this strong Mediterranean influence, Tunisians embraced the New World crops of chiles, tomatoes, potatoes, and squash. Tunisian cuisine is the spiciest of the countries of North Africa. A symbol of this love of chiles comes in the form of its famous chile condiment, *harissa*. Cumin, black peppercorns, and caraway are the spices most often encountered, and olive oils produced in Tunisia are world class (as are their table olives). Eggs are used in abundance, and lamb, beef, and poultry are popular meats. Fish from the Mediterranean provides needed protein and a varied diet, and it is also reasonably priced.

Olives Stuffed with Ground Beef in a Spicy Ragout Marquit Zeitoun

TUNISIA

Serves 8

This dish is a specialty of the city of Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. The olives are pitted in a spiral fashion, and a spicy ground beef filling is inserted into the center. The stuffed olives are then braised in a piquant beef-and-tomato sauce laced with *harissa*, the hot chile paste, and *tabil*, the basic spice mix of Tunisia. Here the dish is topped with roasted green chiles, but in Tunisia they would be fried in olive oil.

CHEF NOTES

Lamb or veal may be substituted for the beef in this dish. Care should be taken at all steps to ensure that the ragout does not dry out and scorch.

RAGOUT

- 1 pound [450 g] lean beef, cut into ¼-inch [6-mm] cubes
- ½ teaspoon [3 mL] black pepper
- 1 tablespoon [15 mL] *tabil* (see page 399)
- 1 tablespoon [15 mL] olive oil
- ½ cup [120 mL] onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon [15 mL] tomato paste
- 1 cup [240 mL] tomatoes, diced
- 1 tablespoon [15 mL] fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] *harissa* (see page 396), diluted in 1 tablespoon chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] paprika
- 2½ cups [600 mL] chicken stock, plus more if needed

STUFFING

- 12 ounces [360 mL] lean beef, minced or coarsely ground
- ½ cup [80 mL] parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup [60 mL] Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 egg
- 1 egg yolk
- 3 tablespoons [45 mL] onion, diced very fine
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ tablespoon [8 mL] *tabil* spice mix
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] *harissa*, diluted in 2 tablespoons cold water
- 32 large Sicilian olives, pitted in a spiral fashion, leaving corkscrew-shaped strips, soaked in several changes of water to remove excess saltiness, and well drained
- ¾ teaspoon [4 mL] fennel seeds, lightly toasted until fragrant, cooled, and ground

GARNISH

- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 Anaheim or New Mexico medium-hot green chiles, roasted, peeled, and cut into thin strips
- Crusty country bread, for service

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Place the beef in a resealable plastic bag. Add the black pepper and *tabil* spice mix, tossing to fully coat the meat with the spices. Marinate at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

PREPARATION OF THE RAGOUT

2. Heat the olive oil in a large nonstick skillet to medium-high heat and sauté the beef cubes until lightly browned. Add the onion and sauté until soft.
3. Add the tomato paste, tomatoes, lemon juice, *harissa*, paprika, and chicken stock. Simmer for 1 hour, covered, or until the meat is very tender. Reserve. (The ragout can be made one day in advance.)

PREPARATION OF THE STUFFED OLIVES

4. Combine all of the stuffing ingredients in the workbowl of a food processor and blend to a uniform mixture. Form the stuffing into 32 marble-size ovals.
5. Place a piece of stuffing into the center of each olive strip. Using wet hands, wrap and press the olive strips firmly around the stuffing, reforming an olive shape, and reserve. (The stuffed olives can be made one day in advance and stored wrapped and refrigerated.)

COOKING METHOD

6. Gently place the stuffed olives in the simmering ragout, tightly cover the skillet, and cook for 45 minutes. Gently turn the olives after 20 minutes, adding more stock or water only if necessary.
7. Using a slotted spoon, remove the olives to an ovenproof dish. Reduce the sauce to 1¾ cups [420 mL] and skim off any fat.
8. Just before service, place the olives under a broiler to heat and glaze them. Heat the chile strips and reserve. Stir the fennel seeds into the ragout and adjust seasonings.

SERVICE

9. Place 4 stuffed olives on a plate and top generously with the ragout. Add a twist of freshly ground black pepper and garnish with chile strips arranged attractively. Serve with bread on the side.

Lamb Kebabs, Marrakech Style, with Spicy Chile Paste (*Harissa*) Al Kotban Mrakchiya

MOROCCO

serves 8

Harissa, the fiery Tunisian spice paste, is widely used as a condiment at the table in Morocco. It can be made as mild or as hot as desired by varying the kind of dried chiles used. For a milder sauce, use guajillo or ancho chiles. For a more piquant version use dried chipotle, habanero, or Thai chiles.

CHEF NOTES

Other meats or poultry appropriate for grilling may be substituted for the lamb. The kebabs may be broiled or grilled on a gas grill, but the best flavor will come from grilling over a wood fire. You can buy *harissa* or make your own. Prepared chile paste (*sambal oelek*) may be substituted for the chiles.

SPICY CHILE PASTE (HARISSA):
MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP [240 mL]

12 dried chiles (6 guajillo, 4 pasilla, 2 chipotle recommended, soaked in warm chicken stock)

4 garlic cloves, chopped

½ cup [120 mL] extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon [15 mL] fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon [5 mL] salt, or to taste

1 teaspoon [5 mL] ground cumin

MARINADE

6 tablespoons [90 mL] olive oil

¼ cup [60 mL] cilantro, chopped

¼ cup [60 mL] parsley, chopped

1 small onion, quartered

3 garlic cloves, chopped

½ tablespoon [8 mL] ground cumin

1½ tablespoons [25 mL] sweet paprika

6 tablespoons [90 mL] fresh lemon juice

½ tablespoon [8 mL] black pepper

KEBABS

1½ pounds [675 g] leg of lamb, well trimmed, cut into 1-inch [2.5-cm] cubes

16 skewers, soaked in water 30 minutes if wooden

Salad greens and mint leaves, to line plates

Harissa, for service

Salt mixed with ground cumin, for service

Pita bread

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- To prepare the spice paste, lightly char the chiles over a burner flame until they begin to expand. Split the chiles open and remove the seeds and stems.

2. Chop the chiles coarsely and soak in a bowl of warm water until they soften, about 25 to 30 minutes. Drain the chiles and squeeze as much moisture as possible from them.
3. Place the chiles in a blender or food processor with all remaining spice paste ingredients and process to a smooth paste. Top with a layer of olive oil and store in the refrigerator. The *harissa* should be made at least a day in advance for the flavors to blend.

PREPARATION OF THE MARINADE

4. Combine all the marinade ingredients in a food processor and pulse to a smooth paste. Place the marinade and lamb cubes in a resealable plastic bag and marinate, refrigerated, for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

PREPARATION OF THE KEBABS

5. Drain the meat and place 1½ ounces [45 g] of lamb on each skewer.

COOKING METHOD

6. Grill the kebabs for 6 to 8 minutes over a medium-hot indirect wood or charcoal fire for medium rare, turning occasionally. Do not char the meat.

SERVICE

7. Line a plate with greens and mint leaves. Serve 2 warm kebabs per person with small dishes of *harissa* and salt mixed with a little cumin. Serve with pita bread.

Baked Fennel Bulbs Stuffed with Lamb

Bisbas Michchi

TUNISIA

serves 8

Fennel is popular during the winter and spring in Tunisia and Algeria, and the technique of baking stuffed vegetables is found throughout the Middle East, the Maghreb, and the Mediterranean. Tunisians would add some *harissa* to spice up the tomato sauce for this dish.

4 large fennel bulbs

FILLING

1 pound [450 g] ground lamb

2 garlic cloves, minced

¼ cup [60 mL] parsley, minced

½ tablespoon [8 mL] *tabil* spice mix (see Chef Notes)

½ tablespoon [8 mL] ground black pepper

3 tablespoons [45 mL] olive oil

2 eggs, lightly beaten

¼ cup [60 mL] grated Parmesan cheese

1 cup [60 mL] spicy tomato sauce, homemade or prepared

Parmesan cheese, for garnish

Minced fennel leaves, for garnish

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Trim the hard base off each fennel bulb and remove the tops. Reserve some of the fennel leaves for garnish. Blanch the bulbs in simmering salted water for 15 minutes, or until just tender. Drain, cool, cut in half lengthwise, and reserve. (The fennel bulbs can be prepared one day in advance.)

PREPARATION OF THE LAMB

2. Combine the lamb, garlic, parsley, *tabil* spice mix, and pepper in a bowl and mix well. Sauté this mixture in the olive oil until browned. Allow to cool.
3. Mix in the eggs and Parmesan cheese. (The lamb mixture can be made 1 day in advance and stored refrigerated.) The bulbs may be stuffed and wrapped in plastic film, then cooked to order.

COOKING METHOD

4. Place the fennel bulbs in an oiled shallow baking dish, cut side up. Top with the lamb mixture. Cover with tomato sauce

 **CHEF NOTES**

Tabil is a classic Tunisian spice mixture that can be purchased premixed in Middle Eastern groceries, or you can make your own.

Tabil Spice Mix

Makes about 3 tablespoons [45 mL]

*2 tablespoons [30 mL]
coriander seeds*

*2 teaspoons [10 mL] caraway
seeds*

½ teaspoon [3 mL] cayenne

*¼ teaspoon [1 mL] fennel
seeds*

¼ teaspoon [1 mL] aniseed

*¼ teaspoon [1 mL] ground
cumin*

¼ teaspoon [1 mL] turmeric

*1 teaspoon [5 mL] black
pepper*

1. Lightly toast the spice mixture in a nonstick skillet over medium heat until aromatic.
2. Allow to cool, then finely grind in a blender or spice grinder. Store in a glass jar in a dark, cool place.

and bake at 400°F [205°C] for 15 to 20 minutes, or until nicely browned and set.

SERVICE

5. Serve 1 fennel bulb half per person. garnish with Parmesan cheese and minced fennel leaves.

Phyllo Rolls with Two Fillings (Fatima's Little Fingers) Maasems (Doigts de Fatma)

TUNISIA

serves 8 (4 rolls per person)

These delicate phyllo rolls can be filled with cheese and hard-boiled egg or with chicken, cheese, and egg. Traditionally they are encased in a thin, chewy pastry called a *malsouka*, which is very similar to the Moroccan *warka* leaves used to make *bisteeya* (see page 402). These traditional wrappers are difficult to make, so many chefs use phyllo, thin spring roll wrappers, or even egg roll wrappers as a substitute. These appetizers are sometimes called *doights de Fatima*, after the daughter of Mohammed, because it is said (with great respect) that they resemble her thin, delicate fingers.

CHEESE FILLING: MAKES ENOUGH FOR 20 ROLLS

- ¾ cup [180 mL] ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup [180 mL] Gruyère cheese, grated
- ¼ cup [60 mL] Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne, or more to taste
- ¾ teaspoon [4 mL] salt
- 1 egg plus 1 yolk, beaten

CHICKEN FILLING: MAKES ENOUGH FOR 20 ROLLS

- 1 tablespoon [15 mL] *tabil* spice mix (see page 393)
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] *harissa* (see page 396)
- 1 tablespoon [15 mL] tomato paste
- 1½ cups [360 mL] rich chicken stock
- 2 boneless chicken thighs, both sides scored with a sharp knife
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and chopped
- ½ cup [120 mL] parsley, chopped
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3 tablespoons [45 mL] Parmesan cheese, grated
- ½ teaspoon [3 mL] salt, or more to taste
- ½ teaspoon [3 mL] black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne

WRAPPERS

- 8 phyllo leaves or 32 spring roll or egg roll wrappers
- 2 eggs, hard-boiled and peeled, each cut into 8 pieces
- 2 egg whites, beaten slightly
- Olive oil
- Olive or vegetable oil, for frying
- Lemon wedges, for garnish

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Combine the ricotta, Gruyère, and Parmesan cheese, pepper, cayenne, salt, egg, and egg yolk and mix well. Reserve, re-

CHEF NOTES

These rolls are quite versatile and may be filled with minced lamb seasoned with onions, *tabil* spice mix, *harissa*, and tomato paste. If a Tunisian or Moroccan market is nearby, genuine *mal-souka* or *warka* pastry may be available. The rolls may be baked rather than fried. Brush the stuffed pastries with olive oil and bake at 400°F [205°C] until crisp and browned.

refrigerated and covered. (The cheese filling can be made 1 day in advance.)

PREPARATION OF THE CHICKEN FILLING

2. Bring the *tabil* spice mix, *harissa*, tomato paste, and stock to a boil in a small skillet, then reduce the heat to a simmer.
3. Simmer the chicken thighs in the seasoned stock until cooked through. Allow the chicken thighs to remain in the poaching liquid to cool.
4. Remove the chicken thighs and finely dice them. Combine the diced chicken with the remaining chicken filling ingredients and mix well. Reserve, refrigerated and covered. (The chicken filling can be made one day in advance.)

ASSEMBLY METHOD

5. Unroll one sheet of phyllo, keeping the rest covered to prevent drying out, and cut it into quarters. Fold each quarter in half and place 1 to 2 tablespoons [15 to 30 mL] of the cheese filling near the bottom of each folded phyllo quarter. Leave ½ inch [1 cm] borders filling-free. Place a section of hard-boiled egg on top of the cheese filling. Do the same with the chicken filling. Repeat, using half of the phyllo sheets.
6. Lightly brush the edges of the phyllo with egg white and roll up the phyllo to form cylinders. Place them seam side down on a tray.
7. Brush the tops lightly with olive oil. Pinch the ends to seal them securely. (If using spring roll or egg roll wrappers, trim them into 5-inch [13-cm] squares and proceed as with the phyllo sheets.) Keep tightly covered until ready to cook.

COOKING METHOD

8. Fill a large skillet to a depth of 1 inch [2.5 cm] with olive or vegetable oil and heat it to 360°F [180°C]. Fry the rolls in batches, turning halfway through the cooking process, until golden brown on both sides. Remove and drain on paper towels. Keep warm until service.

SERVICE

9. Serve 4 rolls per person (two of each kind) with a lemon wedge.

Phyllo Triangles with Quail, Eggs, Onions, and Spices

Briouat el B'stila (Braewat el Bisteeya)

MOROCCO

serves 8

B'stila (*bisteeya*) is traditionally made with very thin sheets of pastry called *warka*. It takes a true master to produce these sheets of pastry and in Morocco they are made by *dadas*, women descended from Sudanese slaves. Modern Moroccan housewives no longer make their own pastry sheets, preferring to purchase them at the market from the *dadas*. Phyllo dough makes an excellent substitute for *warka*. *B'stila* (*bisteeya*) is normally made in the shape of a large, flattened pie, but this version, known as a *briouat*, is made into small triangles for individual service.

The spice mix in this recipe, *ras el hanout*, is a complex blend that may contain more than twenty spices. Most recipes in Morocco include an aphrodisiac such as Spanish fly, but this ingredient is not present in the recipe given in the Chef Notes. The literal translation of *ras el hanout* is “top of the shop.”

3 tablespoons [45 mL] blanched almonds, coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons [25 mL] unsalted butter

½ tablespoon [8 mL] confectioner's sugar

¾ teaspoon [4 mL] ground cinnamon

QUAIL

2 quail

1 small onion, minced

2 garlic cloves

½ teaspoon [3 mL] ground ginger

¼ teaspoon [1 mL] *ras el hanout* (see Chef Notes)

⅛ teaspoon [0.5 mL] dried hot chile

4 threads saffron, toasted and crushed

¾ cup [180 mL] chicken stock

1½ tablespoons [25 mL] parsley, minced

1 tablespoon [15 mL] cilantro, minced

2 eggs, lightly beaten

Salt to taste

PHYLLO TRIANGLES

8 sheets phyllo pastry, thawed and covered with a damp cloth

Clarified butter, melted, to brush on triangles

Confectioner's sugar, to dust triangles

Ground cinnamon, to dust triangles

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Sauté the almonds in butter until golden brown and aromatic. Add the confectioner's sugar and ¼ teaspoon [1 mL] of the cinnamon, and stir to coat. Reserve.

PREPARATION OF THE QUAIL

2. Heat the butter and brown the quail over medium-high heat. Remove and reserve the quail.

CHEF NOTES

Chicken, squab, or partridge may be substituted for the quail. *Ras el hanout* can be purchased at some Middle Eastern groceries or you can make your own.

Ras el Hanout

Makes about ¼ cup [60 mL]

2½ tablespoons [40 mL]
allspice berries

¼ cup [60 mL] black
peppercorns

2 tablespoons [30 mL] dried
galangal

1½ tablespoons [25 mL] mace
blades

1½ whole nutmegs, cracked

10 cardamom pods

20 threads saffron

¾ cup [180 mL] ground ginger

¼ cup [60 mL] ground
cinnamon

2 tablespoons [30 mL] turmeric

1 clove

3 dried rosebuds or
2 tablespoons [30 mL]
dried rose petals

1. Place all the ingredients in a dry nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and toast, stirring constantly, until the mixture becomes fragrant, about 3 minutes.
2. Grind the mixture in a blender or spice grinder until very fine. Pass through a very fine sieve. Store in a cool, dark place.

3. Add the onion and garlic. Sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the remaining ½ teaspoon [3 mL] of cinnamon, the ginger, *ras el hanout*, hot chile, and saffron. Briefly sauté until aromatic. Immediately add the chicken stock, the reserved quail, and any accumulated juices and bring to a boil.
4. Reduce the heat and simmer until the quail are cooked, about 15 minutes. Remove the quail to cool and reduce the liquid until most has evaporated.
5. While the liquid is reducing, bone the quail, reserving the meat and any accumulated juices. Add the parsley and cilantro to the reduced liquid.
6. Stir the beaten egg into the reduction and scramble the mixture until the eggs are cooked and fluffy. Season to taste with salt. Add the quail meat and any juices and mix well. Reserve and allow to cool. (This filling may be prepared 1 day in advance and refrigerated.)

PREPARATION OF THE PHYLLO TRIANGLES

7. Remove 1 phyllo sheet and brush it with melted clarified butter. Immediately cover the remaining phyllo sheets with the cloth. Fold the sheet in half lengthwise and brush the surface with more clarified butter.
8. To form triangles, place 1 to 2 tablespoons [15 to 30 mL] of filling at the bottom of the folded sheet, about ¼ inch [6 mm] from the edge. Top with some of the reserved almond mixture.
9. Bring 1 corner of the pastry over the filling and fold to form a triangle. Brush with clarified butter and fold over again. Continue brushing with butter and folding (as you would fold a flag) until the opposite end of the pastry is reached. Fold any excess phyllo under the triangle to maintain the shape.
10. Place on a parchment-lined sheet pan and cover with plastic film. Continue until all the triangles are formed in this way. (The phyllo triangles may be made several hours in advance and stored covered and refrigerated.)

COOKING METHOD

11. Place the folded phyllo pastries on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Brush the tops of the triangles with clarified butter and bake at 400°F [205°C] for 10 to 15 minutes, or until golden brown.

SERVICE

12. Dust the tops of the triangles with confectioner's sugar. Create an interesting pattern (lattice or geometric is traditional) with cinnamon sprinkled over the confectioner's sugar.

Grilled Tuna Kebabs with Herb-Lemon Marinade Thon bi Chermoula (Tchermila)

MOROCCO

serves 8 (2 kebabs per person)

Chermoula is a marinade that can be used on most meats, poultry, and seafood; it is especially good with tuna or swordfish steaks. Prepared in this manner, the marinated food can be char-grilled, broiled, sautéed, or baked. Cooking over live coals provides the most flavorful dish. In this recipe the fish is first marinated with a portion of the *chermoula*, then dressed with the rest after grilling. The *chermoula* may also be used to baste the fish as it cooks.

CHEF NOTES

This method works very well with most shellfish, is excellent with poultry, and is often used with lamb. The fish may be cut into medallions and grilled rather than skewered as a kebab. Preserved lemons can be purchased in Middle Eastern markets.

CHERMOULA MARINADE: MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP [240 mL]

- 1 preserved lemon, rinsed and minced fine
- 3 tablespoons [45 mL] parsley, chopped
- 3 tablespoons [45 mL] cilantro, chopped
- ⅓ teaspoon [0.5 mL] crushed saffron, lightly toasted
- ½ teaspoon [3 mL] paprika
- ¼ teaspoon [1 mL] cayenne, or more to taste
- ½ teaspoon [3 mL] ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] salt
- 2 tablespoons [30 mL] fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup [60 mL] olive oil

1½ pounds [675 g] tuna or swordfish steaks, cut into ¾-inch [2-cm] cubes

16 skewers, soaked for 30 minutes in water prior to use if wooden

- 1 preserved lemon, rinsed, pulp removed, and cut into thin strips
- Sprigs of cilantro or parsley, for garnish

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Combine all of the *chermoula* ingredients in the workbowl of a food processor and process to a coarse purée.
2. Place the fish in a resealable plastic bag and pour in half of the marinade. Toss to coat. Allow to marinate at least 4 hours, preferably overnight, refrigerated.

COOKING METHOD

3. Make the kebabs, using 1½ ounces [45 g] of fish (about 3 cubes) per skewer. Grill the skewers slowly over indirect heat of a live coal fire. The fish should be cooked to medium rare and not be charred.

SERVICE

4. Serve 2 skewers per person, topped with the reserved *chermoula*. Garnish with the thin strips of preserved lemon and sprigs of cilantro or parsley.

Rice-Stuffed Dates Wrapped in Sole with Sweet and Sour Sauce Samak Mehshi bi Tamr

MOROCCO

serves 8

In this surprising dish, a small strip of sole fillet is wrapped around a date that has been stuffed with a mixture of cooked ground rice, almonds, ginger, and onion, then broiled. The rolls are paired with a sweet and sour sauce of onions and raisins, infused with saffron. In Morocco, a whole fish stuffed with filled dates is a popular way to enjoy this dish.

CHEF NOTES

Many types of white-fleshed fish work in this dish, especially flounder, cod, halibut, sea bass, or tilapia. Split large shrimp may also be wrapped around the stuffed dates with the same effect.

SAUCE

- 3 tablespoons [45 mL] olive oil
- 1½ pounds [675 g] onions, thinly sliced
- 5 ounces [140 g] white raisins
- ⅛ teaspoon [0.5 mL] saffron threads, crushed
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon [3 mL] black pepper
- ¼ cup [60 mL] sugar
- ¼ cup [60 mL] white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons [30 mL] orange flower water

FISH ROLLS

- 16 strips fillet of sole or other delicate-flavored fish, 2 inches [5 cm] by 3 to 4 inches [8 to 10 cm]
- Salt and pepper
- 3 fluid ounces [85 mL] water
- Pinch of salt
- 1½ tablespoons [25 mL] cream of rice
- 2½ ounces [75 g] ground almonds, lightly toasted until fragrant but not browned
- ¼ teaspoon [1 mL] ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon [5 mL] sugar
- ¼ teaspoon [2 mL] ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons [30 mL] melted unsalted butter
- 16 large Medjool dates, pitted with skins left intact
- 2 tablespoons [30 mL] grated onion
- ½ cup [120 mL] water or fish fumet
- Ground ginger, for dusting
- Ground cinnamon, for dusting
- Toasted almonds, for garnish

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- I. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Add the onions and raisins. Sauté until the onions are golden.

2. Add the saffron, cinnamon, pepper, sugar, and vinegar. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture begins to reduce and thickens. (The sauce can be made 1 day in advance.) Just before service, stir in the orange flower water and reserve, warm.

PREPARATION OF THE FISH ROLLS

3. Lightly season the fish fillet strips with salt and pepper and reserve.
4. Bring 3 fluid ounces of water to boil, season with a pinch of salt, and quickly stir in the cream of rice. Boil, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Remove from the heat. Allow the cream of rice to cool.
5. Add all but 2 tablespoons [30 mL] of the ground almonds, all of the ginger, the sugar, black pepper, and 1 tablespoon [15 mL] of the melted butter. Mix well and stuff each date with about ½ teaspoon [3 mL] of the mixture.
6. Place each stuffed date at 1 end of a strip of fish and roll up to enclose the date, securing each roll with a toothpick. Lightly tap the rolls on a hard surface so they stand upright. Place the rolls in a buttered baking dish, leaving a small amount of space between the rolls.
7. Mix the grated onion with ½ cup [120 mL] of water or fish fumet and pour it into the dish. Avoid pouring the liquid directly on top of the fish rolls. Top each roll with the remaining melted butter, and dust the tops of the rolls with ginger, the remaining almonds, and cinnamon.

COOKING METHOD

8. Bake the fish rolls for 15 minutes at 375°F [190°C], or until the tops begin to turn golden brown and the fish is opaque but moist.
9. Remove the rolls and reserve warm. Pour the pan juices into a small skillet and reduce over high heat.

SERVICE

10. For each serving, place 2 fish rolls on a pool of warm sauce. Spoon the reduced pan juices over each roll. Garnish with toasted almonds and dust with cinnamon.