

CHICKPEA AND VEGETABLE COUSCOUS

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This comforting and satisfying North African-style dish features warm spices and lots of fresh vegetables. If possible, use whole wheat pearl or Israeli couscous for added nutrition and slight nutty flavor.

The stew and couscous can be prepared ahead separately, then refrigerated for later use, and both also freeze well.

Makes: 4 - 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive or avocado oil
1 small onion, peeled, diced
2 cloves garlic, peeled, minced
1 tablespoon tomato paste (no added sugar, low or no sodium)
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon dried cilantro
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (more or less to taste)
1 ½ cups cauliflower florets, bite-sized pieces
1-pound sweet potato, peeled and diced
8 ounces baby carrots
½ red or yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced
1 - 1 ½ cups water
8 ounces zucchini, ½" slices
1 (14 ounce) can chick peas, drained and rinsed thoroughly (no sodium)
2 (14 ounce) cans diced tomatoes (no added sugar, low or no sodium)
½ teaspoon Kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

1 tablespoon olive or avocado oil
1 cup pearl or Israeli couscous, uncooked (whole wheat variety preferred)
1 ¼ cups water or vegetable stock (no added sugar, no or low sodium)
¼ teaspoon Kosher salt

fresh cilantro or parsley leaves for garnish, if desired, washed, patted dry and chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large saute pan with sides or Dutch oven, heat the 2 tablespoons of oil over medium heat. Add the onion and saute until soft, about 2 minutes. Add the garlic and saute an additional 30 seconds, until fragrant and just starting to soften.
2. Stir in the tomato paste, coriander, cumin, cilantro, turmeric and cayenne pepper. Cook, stirring almost constantly, for about 1 minute.

3. Add the cauliflower, sweet potato, carrots, and bell pepper to the pan. Pour enough water so that there is enough liquid to come half way up the sides of the pan. (Discard any extra water.) Bring mixture to a boil, then lower the heat to a gentle simmer, cover and cook for 10 minutes.

4. While the stew is simmering, prepare the couscous. In a medium-sized sauce pan, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Add the couscous and toast, stirring often, for about 1 minute. Carefully pour the water or stock into the pan, add the salt, and stir to combine. Cover the pot and reduce the heat to a low simmer. Cook for 10 minutes, until water is absorbed and couscous is al dente (tender yet not mushy). Keep covered until ready to serve. When ready to serve, stir gently to fluff.

5. Finish the stew - add the zucchini, chickpeas, tomatoes, salt and pepper to the pan, stir gently to combine, and simmer gently, uncovered, for 10 - 12 more minutes.

To serve, place about ½ cup couscous into an individual serving bowl and top with the stew. Garnish with chopped fresh cilantro or parsley, if desired.