

THE FEARLESS OLIVE
BY REEMA ISLAM



Healthy is the new delicious

O moon-faced Beloved, the month of Ramadan has arrived, Cover the table, and open the path of praise.

Ramadan is here in the blazing summer heat; let us make this month of supplication, devotion and abstinence one that makes us feel lighter, healthier and thankful for all we have. It is a great time to let your body regenerate so drink lots of liquids, avoid those massive food orgies that everyone regrets the next day and above all, avoid wasting food.

Here's to a blessed month of sharing, eating light and a rebooting of our conscience!

I remember my mother rolling a ball of curdled milk or chhana, with some sugar as a quick dessert to keep me busy. This deliciously simple milk product is heavily used in desserts, but can also moonlight as a veritable cottage cheese. The Portuguese are often credited for introducing the Bengalis and Oriyas to cheese. For now, we add it to our healthy Ramadan spread.

CHHANA WITH SEASONAL FRUITS SALAD

Ingredients

1 cup curdled milk
2 guavas (take the bigger, sweet ones) diced and de-seeded
1 large ripe mango
2 small green mangoes, 1 large ripe papaya
2 tbsp roasted pumpkin seeds
2 tbsp tamarind pulp
2 tbsp molasses or gur
1 tsp cumin powder (optional)
Salt to taste, or black salt
Handful chopped basil

Method

Mix tamarind pulp with molasses and salt to make a syrup or chutney. You may add some cumin or zeera powder to this. Curdle milk with some lemon or ascorbic acid, and make chhana. You may knead it with your hands for some smoothness, but best is to



leave it a little grainy. Dry roast pumpkin seeds till they pop in the pan. Dice all fruits and mix in a bowl with the seeds and basil leaves. Scoop the chhana out with a spoon and drop it in round dollops inside the fruit bowl. Pour the syrup on top and serve chilled.

CHICKPEA SOUP IN A LIGHT CHICKEN BROTH WITH COUSCOUS

Ingredients

½ chicken, cleaned
2 tbsp chopped celery
3 cups chickpea, which have been soaked overnight
½ cup couscous
½ tbsp garlic paste and 2 garlic cloves,



diced

1 large leek chopped or 4-5 bulbs of green/spring onions
Salt and pepper, to taste
Olive oil

Method

Boil chicken with celery, leeks or spring onions, salt and pepper, garlic and boil until the chicken starts to separate (about 1.5 hrs). Scoop out the chicken pieces and strain the broth. Add chickpeas and diced garlic to this liquid and boil until they are almost cooked. At this point add couscous and cook for about ten minutes. Take off the cooker and serve immediately or if you want to leave it aside, remember to add

some extra water as the couscous tends to expand in size. Serve with a generous swirl of olive oil and sprinkle chopped basil or mint.

Health benefits

Chickpeas are a great source of dietary fibre and proteins, and are ideal at filling your stomach yet not overloading the digestive system. A great opener at iftar for the fasting stomach and the light chicken broth adds the necessary liquid.

JALAPENO BOATS STUFFED WITH DHAKA PONEER

The hot Mediterranean sun calls for a meal that is tangy and one that equally challenges the heat of the day. A popular Greek dish is peppers stuffed with feta cheese. The Fearless Olive changes the ingredients a bit, using local ingredients.

Ingredients

8-10 large jalapenos, de-seeded and tops chopped off
200g Dhaka poneer
1 tsp nigella seeds or kalo jeera
1 tbsp oregano powder
1 tbsp finely chopped parsley or coriander
Apple cider vinegar
Salt and pepper, to taste
Olive oil

Method

Smear jalapenos with olive oil then roast them on an open fire. Then cut them in long halves and peel the skin off. After this, marinate them for about 2 hours in enough vinegar, a pinch of salt and some olive oil, to cover them. Roughly crush nigella seeds and mix it with crumbled feta, parsley and adjust salt and pepper. After marinating, take the jalapenos out and fill them with the Dhaka poneer mix. You may fire with a flaming torch to give it that grilled effect or try to turn the jalapeno boat onto a grill if you can manage the same effect otherwise.

The feta stuffed jalapenos resemble little boats, so serve them as a side dish.