

MAQLUBA (Upside-Down Rice & Chicken)

Recipe from Gary Sankary, VNF board member

Yield: 8 servings

Gary's Pro Tip: Gather all the pots and pans you will need, so they're ready to go.

- Large Dutch oven. I use a Lodge Logic 6-quart version.
- Large fry pan
- Four small containers for the spices and other ingredients
- Two plates and lots of paper towels to blot up the oil from the fried foods
- 2 Extra large (I use one four and one 6-cup) bowls or measuring cups that can handle hot liquids and be sealed.
- Various spatulas, spoons, etc.



Ingredients:

1 cut up fryer. I use the Gerber Chicken brand from Valley Natural Foods; about 4 lbs. works best. Alternatively, 4 lbs. of bone-in chicken thighs would be good. Spices and seasoning- all the spices are available in the bulk department.

For the Chicken

- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 ½ tsp black pepper
- Six whole cloves
- Six green cardamom pods
- Three bay leaves
- One small onion sliced into large wedges

For the Veggies

- 1 medium eggplant- sliced
- ½ head of cauliflower cut into chunks
- 1 medium potato cut into ½ inch slices
- 3 to 4 carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup vermicelli noodles broken into ½ to 1-inch pieces

For the Rice

- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp allspice
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- Three cloves of garlic- crushed
- 1/3 of a cup of pine nuts- roasted and in reserve (last step)

Directions

The Day Before:

1. Season the chicken parts well with the chicken spices except for the onions, and put them in the refrigerator. (if you forget, anytime up to about an hour before you want to cook is ok.)

Cooking Day

2. Slice the eggplant into ½ inch slices and season well with salt to draw out the water. Minimum ½ hour, preferably up to an hour, set aside.
3. Put the chicken in the Dutch oven, add the onions and 4 ½ cups of water and bring to a boil covered over high heat. Turn down to a simmer and cover. Cook for 20 minutes.
4. Bring 3 cups of water to a boil. Put the rice in a large heat-proof bowl, add boiling water, seal tightly, set for 10 minutes, drain well and put aside.
5. After 20 minutes of simmering, remove the chicken onto a plate. Strain the broth into a large bowl and discard the spices. Keep the empty Dutch oven handy; you'll need it again. (Don't wash it)
6. Heat the frying pan, and add ½ inch of oil to the pan. Season the veggies lightly with salt. Fry the carrots for about 4 minutes per side until mostly cooked. Fry the potatoes for about 3 min per side and then the cauliflower for about 8 minutes on the cauliflower. You want the veggies to be seared and mostly cooked.
7. Pour out all but a couple of tablespoons of the oil and fry the vermicelli until browned—about 2 minutes. Add the drained rice and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring to mix the vermicelli and keep it from burning. Add the rice, spices turmeric, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, and garlic and stir for about one more minute. The mixture should be fragrant.

Assembly

8. Put the chicken back in the Dutch oven, skin side down. Layer the veggies, (including the set aside eggplant) onto the chicken. Add the rice mixture; the Dutch oven should be almost at capacity.
9. Gently pour the reserved broth into the pot. You want the liquid level to be even with the rice. If you don't have enough broth, add some water.
10. Cover the pot and bring it to a boil over high heat. Once it boils, reduce the heat to a simmer. Check the mixture every 10 minutes or so. Push the hard rice on top down into the liquid to ensure even cooking of the rice.
11. Simmer for 30 minutes.

The Flip

12. Find a serving plate large enough to cover the entire mouth of the Dutch oven. With oven mitts on and maybe some help, (it's big and awkward) flip the Dutch oven. DO NOT REMOVE IT YET. Sop up any liquid seeping out with paper towels.
13. Let the pot sit for 5 minutes.
14. Lift the pot. Scatter the pine nuts and fresh parsley over the top. Serve with yogurt, chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, and lemon slices.