

Anatolian Purslane, Lamb and Lentil Stew (pirpirim asi)

In early fall, use bulky bunches of purslane for this recipe.
Serves 4 to 6.

- 1/2 cup dried black-eyed peas, soaked overnight and drained
- 1/3 cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight and drained
- 1/4 cup mini brown lentils, picked over and rinsed (See box)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 5 ounces boneless lamb shoulder, cut into 1/2-inch dice
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons Turkish red pepper paste (See Notes)
- 1 1/2 pounds purslane, thick stems discarded and leaves coarsely shredded
- 1/2 cup coarse bulgur
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- Salt
- 1 tablespoon dried spearmint leaves crushed to a fine powder
- 1/4 teaspoon Turkish red pepper flakes (see Notes)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Trimmed scallions and lemon wedges, for serving

1. Rinse the black-eyed peas and chickpeas. Pour them into separate medium saucepans and cover with several inches of water. Cover and cook over moderate heat until tender, about 20 minutes for the black-eyed peas and 1 hour for the chickpeas. Drain the black-eyed peas and discard the liquid. Drain the chickpeas; reserve 1/3 cup of the cooking liquid.

2. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, combine the lentils with 4 cups of water, cover partially and cook over moderate heat until tender, about 40 minutes. Drain; reserve 2 cups of the cooking liquid.

3. In a large, enameled cast-iron casserole, heat 2 tablespoons of the

oil. Add the lamb and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in the onion, cover and cook until softened but not browned, about 2 minutes. Add the tomato paste, red pepper paste and 1/2 cup of water and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook, stirring once or twice, until the mixture begins to caramelize, about 20 minutes.

4. Add the purslane, bulgur and the reserved chickpea and lentil cooking liquids to the casserole. Cover and cook for 10 minutes. Add the chickpeas, black-eyed peas, lentils, garlic and enough water to barely cover. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, stir in the lemon juice and season with salt.

5. In a small skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil. Add the spearmint, Turkish red pepper flakes and 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper. When the oil begins to sizzle, give it a stir and drizzle it over the stew. Stir once and let stand for 30 minutes. Serve the stew at room temperature or let cool, then refrigerate and serve chilled the following day. Pass the scallions and lemon at the table.

NOTES: Turkish red pepper paste and Turkish red pepper flakes are available at Middle Eastern groceries or by mail order.

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Chef Cynthia Lynch adds: I'll be making a few changes, out of necessity. I won't be able to get the pepper paste this week, and my current diet won't allow for something as rich as lamb. (But if anyone tries it this way, let me know how it is.) So I'll add a red bell pepper in place of the paste, along with some hot pepper flakes, because the paste is supposed to be spicy. I'll replace the lamb with chicken, and maybe use some chicken stock instead of the bean cooking water since I'll be making do with canned beans. And instead of the sizzling garnish, I'll add the mint and pepper directly to the stew to save some fat and calories. Ultimately it won't be as interesting a dish, but I know it will be enjoyable.

Feel free to contact me with questions and comments:
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