Main dishes / Morocco

Couscous with Seven Vegetables

North Africa's communal centerpiece — semolina couscous steamed twice until each grain is featherlight and separate, served over a broth-rich stew of seven vegetables scented with ras el hanout and saffron, the whole table gathering around a single, fragrant mound.

Time 90 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- [ ] 500 g Fine semolina couscous
- [ ] 10 g Fine sea salt
- [ ] 2 whole Yellow onions, roughly diced
- [ ] 2 whole Turnips, peeled and quartered
- [ ] 2 whole Zucchini, cut in thick rounds
- [ ] 400 g Canned chickpeas, drained
- [ ] 8 g Ras el hanout
- [ ] 2 g Ground cinnamon
- [ ] 1200 ml Water (for stew)
- [ ] 30 g Harissa paste, to serve
- [ ] 30 g Unsalted butter or olive oil
- [ ] 60 ml Olive oil (for stew)
- [ ] 2 whole Carrots, peeled and halved
- [ ] 300 g Butternut squash, cut in large chunks
- [ ] 0.25 whole Savoy or green cabbage, cut in wedges
- [ ] 30 g Tomato paste
- [ ] 3 g Ground turmeric
- [ ] 0.3 g Saffron threads, pinch
- [ ] 20 g Fresh cilantro

Let's make it.

01 Heat the olive oil in a large, wide pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden at the edges, about 8 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 2 minutes until it darkens. Add the ras el hanout, turmeric and cinnamon and stir for 30 seconds until fragrant. Bloom the saffron in a tablespoon of warm water and add it to the pot. Add the carrots, turnips and chickpeas, pour in the water, and season generously with salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a steady simmer and cook 20 minutes — these harder vegetables go in first because they need the most time.

02 While the stew base simmers, place the dry couscous in a large bowl. Sprinkle over 1 teaspoon of salt, then drizzle with 3 tablespoons of cold water and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Rub the grains between your palms to distribute the moisture evenly and break up any clumps. If you have a couscoussier or large steamer, line it with a damp cloth and add the couscous. Steam over the simmering stew (or plain boiling water) for 15 minutes. The steam perfumes the couscous with the stew's aromatics.

03 Tip the first-steamed couscous into a large bowl. Add the butter and a ladleful of the hot stew broth. Rake vigorously with your fingers or a large fork, breaking up every clump and coating each grain in the butter and broth. Taste and add more salt if needed. Return to the steamer for a second 15-minute steam. Meanwhile, add the butternut squash, zucchini and cabbage to the stew and continue simmering for the remaining 20–25 minutes until all vegetables are tender and the broth has reduced slightly and thickened.

04 Mound the finished couscous in a high dome on a large round platter or communal bowl. Ladle the vegetable stew with all its vegetables over and around the couscous, allowing the broth to soak into the center of the mound. Scatter chopped cilantro over the top. Serve the remaining hot broth in a small jug on the side for people to add as they eat. Serve the harissa in a separate small dish. Traditionally this is eaten communally, everyone gathering around the shared platter.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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