Main dishes / Egypt

Egyptian Koshari

Cairo's beloved street food: a dramatic assembly of rice, brown lentils, and short macaroni crowned with crackling fried onions, then doused at the table with a fiery spiced tomato sauce and sharp garlicky vinegar.

Time 105 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 50 parts Long-grain white rice
- ☐ 30 parts Short macaroni or ditalini
- ☐ 40 parts Neutral oil (for frying onions)
- ☐ 6 parts Garlic cloves (for sauce, minced)
- ☐ 1 parts Ground coriander (for sauce)
- ☐ 8 parts Red wine vinegar (for sauce)
- ☐ 5 parts Olive oil (for sauce base)
- ☐ 10 parts Vermicelli noodles (broken, toasted)
- ☐ 50 parts Brown or green lentils
- ☐ 80 parts Yellow onions, large (for frying)
- ☐ 80 parts Canned crushed tomatoes
- ☐ 2 parts Ground cumin (for sauce)
- ☐ 2 parts Dried chili flakes or shatta sauce
- ☐ 3 parts Garlic cloves (for vinegar, minced)
- ☐ 3 parts Fine sea salt

Let's make it.

01 Rinse lentils and place in a saucepan with cold water to cover by 5cm. Bring to a boil, reduce to a steady simmer. Cook 20–25 minutes until just tender — they should hold their shape completely but have no chalkiness at the center when bitten. Drain, season lightly with salt, and set aside.

02 Slice onions very thinly and uniformly (use a mandoline or patient knife work — 2mm). Heat neutral oil to 170°C (340°F) in a wide pan (enough oil to submerge the onions — at least 2cm deep). Fry onions in batches, stirring occasionally, until deeply golden-brown and visibly crisp, 12–18 minutes per batch. They continue to darken after removal — pull them at amber, not brown. Drain on paper towels and salt immediately.

03 In a separate saucepan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add minced garlic for the sauce and cook until golden, 1–2 minutes. Add cumin, coriander, and chili flakes; bloom for 30 seconds. Add crushed tomatoes and salt. Simmer over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 20–25 minutes until the sauce has thickened to a loose, concentrated paste and the raw tomato taste is gone. Separately, mix minced raw garlic with red wine vinegar and a pinch of salt for the toum el-khal (garlic vinegar).

04 Rinse rice until water runs clear. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, toast broken vermicelli in a dry pan (or in 1 tsp oil) until golden. Add rice and toast 1 minute more. Add water (1.75x the volume of rice + vermicelli combined) and salt. Bring to a boil, stir once, cover tightly, reduce to the lowest heat. Cook 17 minutes, then rest off heat for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

05 Cook macaroni in well-salted boiling water until just al dente. Drain. To assemble: layer the bottom of a deep bowl with rice-vermicelli, then lentils, then macaroni. Top with a generous handful of crispy fried onions. At the table, ladle tomato sauce liberally over the top and add a spoonful of garlic vinegar. The correct eating order is to mix everything together.

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