

Cook

Persian

in America



Recipes with love from

The Robot Book Club

Cook Persian in America

Authentic Flavors and Modern Traditions for the Everyday Kitchen

The Robot Book Club

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Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Persian.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

Prologue

Look, the world keeps spinning. Empires rise and fall, cultures clash and merge. But for a certain kind of cook—the Iranian-American—there are non-negotiables. A deep, soulful cuisine, born of millennia, that simply refuses to be forgotten. Not some timid, 'Middle Eastern-ish' approximation, mind you. We're talking about the real deal. The stuff that anchors you, no matter how far you roam from the old country.

The catch? Life in America doesn't always accommodate the glorious, time-consuming alchemy of a proper Persian kitchen. The mothers and grandmothers, bless them, they spent hours coaxing flavor from dried limes, meticulously chopping mountains of herbs. Today's cooks, they've got kids, jobs, the relentless grind. How do you honor that legacy, that uncompromising authenticity, without losing a whole Sunday to a single *khores*h?

This book isn't about compromise. It's a strategic playbook. Your cheat sheet for capturing that exact, grandmother-approved flavor using the tools at hand: the local supermarket, your familiar stovetop. It's about understanding the invisible architecture of a Persian meal—the *garmi* and *sardi* that balances body and soul—all while getting proper food on the table, even on a Tuesday.

It's the defiant, golden crackle of *tahdig*, fought over like the last piece of gold bullion. It's the comforting ritual of *noon-o-paneer* at dawn. The deep, verdant embrace of a *ghormeh sabzi* that cures whatever ails you. These aren't just recipes. They are stories. They are connections. They are the fragrant proof that home, true home, lives in the pot, in the shared experience of a *mehmoon*i.

So, consider this your invitation. Your guide to keeping the flame alive. The flavors are here. The memories are waiting. Now, let's cook.



The Iranian-American Pantry & Prep (Setting the Sofreh)

A foundational guide to stocking and prepping your kitchen for authentic, weeknight-ready Persian meals.

The magic of a Persian kitchen doesn't happen at the stove when the guests arrive. It happens in the quiet, unglamorous hours before the fire is even lit. It's the stubborn, repetitive work of frying mountains of onions down to a sticky, golden jam. It's the alchemical patience of coaxing deep blood-red color out of saffron threads with ice. This isn't about romanticizing the old country; it's about survival. It's about taking the fluorescent aisles of a standard American supermarket and bending them to the absolute will of a Tehran grandmother.

Setting the sofreh requires an arsenal. To an outsider, this cuisine looks like a high-wire act of instinct and timing, but the real secret of the Iranian home cook is a deeply pragmatic prep game. Jars of liquid gold waiting in the fridge door. Freezer bags of pre-washed, chopped herbs stacked like bricks. A jar of homemade advieh that smells exactly like Friday afternoons at Maman's house. Here is the foundation—the indispensable groundwork that turns a chaotic weeknight in the diaspora into a fiercely authentic meal.





Ash-e Reshteh

آش رشته

aash-eh resh-teh

Ash-e Reshteh is the ultimate Persian comfort food, a tangled, herbaceous knot of noodles meant to bless travelers and untangle life's problems. For kids who grew up in the States, the scent of caramelized onions and fried mint sizzling in oil means one thing: you are home. The traditional version demands twenty-four hours of soaking and simmering, but the secret your grandmother knows is that the soul of this dish doesn't lie in a raw chickpea. It resides in the mastery of the fried aromatics, a mountain of herbs, and the thick, starchy velvet of the broth. This is how you cheat time without cheating flavor on a Wednesday night.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	extra virgin olive oil	10 oz	frozen chopped spinach <i>thawed and excess water squeezed out</i>
2 large	yellow onions <i>halved and sliced thinly into half-moons</i>	1 large bunch	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>stems removed and roughly chopped</i>
6 med cloves	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	1 large bunch	fresh cilantro <i>stems removed and roughly chopped</i>
1 tbsp	all-purpose flour	1 large bunch	fresh dill <i>stems removed and roughly chopped</i>
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1 bunch	scallions <i>chopped, both white and green parts</i>
2 tbsp	dried mint	8 oz	Reshteh noodles <i>broken in half</i>
3/4 cup	dried green lentils	2 tsp	kosher salt
8 cup	vegetable broth	1 tsp	black pepper
15 oz	canned chickpeas <i>rinsed and drained well</i>	1/2 cup	liquid Kashk
15 oz	canned pinto beans <i>rinsed and drained well</i>		

PREPARATION

- **Squeeze the spinach aggressively.**

Frozen spinach holds a massive amount of water. Wring it out in a kitchen towel until completely dry so you do not dilute the thick, velvety texture of the soup.

- **Have your broth ready.**

Dried mint burns in a flash. Have your broth measured and standing by to pour the exact moment the mint hits the hot oil, immediately stopping the cooking process.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Fry the onions patiently to build the flavor engine.**

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the sliced onions and fry, stirring occasionally, until they reduce, turn deeply golden brown, and begin to crisp. This takes about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove exactly half of the onions from the pot and set them aside on a paper towel to use later as garnish.

2. **Build the thick, aromatic base with garlic, turmeric, and flour.**

Lower the heat to medium. Add the minced garlic to the remaining onions in the pot and sauté for 1 minute until fragrant. Stir in the turmeric and the flour, cooking continuously for 1 minute to toast the flour slightly. Toss in exactly half of the dried mint and stir for just 10 seconds before it burns.

3. **Simmer the broth and lentils.**

Immediately pour in the broth, scraping up all the browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Stir in the dried green lentils, bring the pot to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook for 25 minutes until the lentils are tender but still hold their shape.

4. **Add the beans and herbs, and leave the lid off.**

Stir in the drained chickpeas, pinto beans, thawed spinach, parsley, cilantro, dill, and scallions. From this point forward, do not cover the pot. Trapping the steam will destroy the chlorophyll and turn your vibrant green soup muddy brown. Let it simmer uncovered for 10 to 15 minutes.

5. **Cook the noodles directly in the broth.**

Drop the broken reshteh noodles into the pot and stir well so they do not clump. Simmer uncovered for another 10 to 15 minutes until the noodles are tender. As they cook, they will release starch and thicken the soup to the consistency of a loose chili. Taste and season generously with salt and pepper.

1. Temper the Kashk and garnish the bowls.

Place the Kashk in a small bowl, ladle in a few spoonfuls of hot soup broth, and whisk to temper it so the dairy does not curdle. Ladle the thick soup into bowls, drizzle the tempered Kashk over the top in a swirl, and garnish generously with the reserved crispy golden onions.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Noodle Substitutions.**

If you cannot find Persian reshteh at a local market, Japanese udon or somen noodles work brilliantly because they release a similar amount of starch to thicken the broth. Linguine is a decent, widely available backup.

- **Kashk Substitutions.**

If Kashk is unavailable, whisk a half cup of full-fat sour cream with a tablespoon of white vinegar and a heavy pinch of salt to replicate the distinct salty, fermented tang.

- **The Mint Oil Flourish.**

For a true grandmother finish, heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a tiny skillet, flash fry the remaining tablespoon of dried mint for five seconds, and drizzle this aromatic mint oil over the finished bowls.



Sosis Bandari

سوسیس بندری

so-sees ban-dah-ree

Before the revolution, Tehran's youth practically lived at corner sandwich shops, grabbing these fiercely spiced, fat-glistening sausage sandwiches before hitting the movies. Hailing from the southern port of Abadan—where ancient maritime spice routes collided with the humble hot dog—true Sosis Bandari is an unapologetic blast of turmeric, chilies, and sweet caramelized onion. Forget the modern blogs that pad this dish with potatoes to stretch a buck. Any self-respecting southern cook knows the real magic lies in a sharp bias cut, frying the tomato paste until it surrenders its raw edge, and letting the whole mess rest so the flavors can get intimately acquainted.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	high-quality all-beef hot dogs <i>casings removed and cut on a sharp 1/4-inch bias</i>	1/2 tsp	yellow curry powder
2 large	yellow onions <i>cut into thick julienne slices</i>	1/2 tsp	garlic powder
3 tbsp	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
3 tbsp	tomato paste	4 large	soft sub rolls or baguettes <i>split and slightly hollowed out</i>
1/2 cup	boiling water	1/4 cup	mayonnaise
1 tsp	ground turmeric	4 med	kosher dill pickles <i>sliced thinly lengthwise</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cayenne pepper	1 large	Roma tomato <i>thinly sliced</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1/2 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>roughly chopped</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Caramelize the onions.

Heat two tablespoons of the oil in a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat, slowly cooking the onions until deeply golden and sweet—about 10 to 12 minutes—then remove them to a bowl.

2. Blister the sausages.

Turn the heat to medium-high and toss the bias-cut sausages into the remaining onion oil, frying until the fat renders and a golden-brown crust forms on the edges, then add them to the bowl with the onions.

3. Bloom the spices and fry the tomato paste.

Lower the heat to medium, add the last tablespoon of oil along with all the spices, letting them bloom for 15 seconds, then stir in the tomato paste and fry it aggressively for 2 to 3 minutes until it darkens to a deep brick red and sheds its raw metallic smell.

1. Build the sauce.

Pour in the boiling water and whisk it into the spiced paste to create a glossy red sauce, then return the onions and sausages to the pan to coat them heavily.

2. Simmer and rest.

Turn the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes, then turn off the heat and let the mixture sit for at least 10 minutes so the emulsified meat can absorb the spiced tomato oils.

3. Assemble the sandwiches.

Smear mayonnaise inside the hollowed-out rolls, load them heavily with the warm sausage mixture, and top with the sliced pickles, tomatoes, and a generous fistful of fresh parsley.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Skip the potatoes.**

You will see modern English-language recipes online adding cubed, fried potatoes to this dish to stretch the budget, but native Iranians know that turns this into Sosis Sibzamini; keep the potatoes out to experience the true, potent flavor of authentic Abadan Bandari.

● **The resting phase is the sandwich-shop secret.**

This resting technique, known as sarma didan, is how the corner shops developed such profound flavor. If you have the time, letting the sausage mixture cool down completely and then reheating it right before serving makes an incredible difference.



Dami Gojeh Farangi / Estamboli Polo

دمی گوجه فرنگی / استانبولی پلو

da-mee go-jeh fa-ran-gee / es-tam-bo-lee po-lo

This is the weeknight heartbeat of the Persian home kitchen, stripping away the multi-pot theater of formal banquet rice for something fast, primal, and intensely comforting. Known interchangeably as Dami Gojeh or Estamboli Polo, it relies on a brilliant bit of grandmotherly fluid math and a single heavy pot to transform basmati, fresh tomatoes, and humble potatoes into a masterpiece. You fry the tomato paste to kill its raw tinny flavor, adjust the cooking water to account for the fresh tomato puree, and let the whole thing gently steam into a fragrant, brick-red mound of pure nostalgia.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	imported Basmati rice <i>washed until water runs clear and drained</i>	3 tbsp	neutral vegetable oil
4 large	Roma or Beefsteak tomatoes <i>halved and grated on a box grater, skins discarded</i>	2 tbsp	unsalted butter
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
1 large	Yukon Gold potato <i>peeled and diced into 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1 tsp	ground turmeric
		1 tsp	kosher salt
		1/2 tsp	black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Wash the rice to prevent mushiness.**

Place the basmati rice in a bowl, wash under cold water while swishing gently, and drain, repeating 3 to 4 times until the water runs completely clear to remove excess surface starch.

- **Grate the tomatoes for a pure liquid puree.**

Rub the cut side of the halved tomatoes against the large holes of a box grater set over a bowl; the flesh will grate effortlessly, leaving only the empty skin in your hand to discard.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Caramelize the onions to build the foundation.**

Heat the vegetable oil in a wide, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat, add the diced onion, and sauté until deeply golden and soft, about 8 to 10 minutes.

- 2. Bloom the spices and fry the potatoes.**

Add the turmeric and black pepper, stirring for thirty seconds until fragrant, then toss in the diced potatoes and cook for four to five minutes to build a slight outer skin that will prevent them from turning to mush.

1. Eliminate the raw taste of the paste.

Push the vegetables to the edge of the pot and drop the tomato paste into the center, frying it in the hot oil for two to three minutes until it deepens from bright red to a dark brick orange.

2. Incorporate the rice and tomatoes.

Stir everything together to coat the ingredients in the turmeric-tomato oil, then add the rinsed rice and pour in the fresh grated tomato puree.

3. Apply the grandmother's fluid mathematics.

Because the tomatoes add moisture, you must reduce the cooking liquid; add just enough fresh water so the total liquid sits exactly one index-finger joint (about half to three-quarters of an inch) above the surface of the rice, then stir in the salt and butter.

4. Boil away the liquid.

Turn the heat to medium-high and boil vigorously uncovered until the water drops below the surface and small steam craters form in the rice bed.

5. Wrap and steam to develop the tahdig.

Wrap the pot lid tightly in a clean kitchen towel to catch condensation, cover the pot, drop the heat to the absolute lowest setting, and let it steam undisturbed for 40 to 45 minutes to finish cooking the rice and crisp the golden crust on the bottom.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The meat variation.**

While true Tehrani Dami Gojeh is entirely meatless, many households stir in a half-pound of thoroughly browned ground beef during the onion-sautéing phase for a heartier meal.

● **Setting the sofreh.**

This rich, starchy dish demands acidic contrast; serve it alongside a bright Shirazi salad of cucumbers and tomatoes, tart pickled vegetables (torshi), and a massive platter of fresh herbs (sabzi khordan).



Omlet-e Gojeh Farangi

املت گوجه فرنگی

om-let-eh go-jeh fah-ran-gee

Forget the delicate, pale French envelope. In Iran, an omelet is a vibrant, bubbling, crimson skillet of aggressively savory tomatoes, deeply caramelized onions, and eggs softly scrambled straight into the sauce. This recipe captures the exact aroma of a late weekend morning in an Iranian household, bridging the comforting home-style version with the umami-bomb bazaar tea-house technique. It demands only one thing: the patience to let the tomatoes cook down until every drop of water evaporates before the eggs hit the pan.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp	neutral oil	1 lb	ripe tomatoes <i>very finely diced or grated, skins discarded</i>
2 tbsp	unsalted butter		
1 small	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	4 large	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tbsp	tomato paste	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the oil and butter in a medium skillet until foaming, then sauté the onion until golden brown.**

Use a stainless steel or cast iron skillet over medium heat. Sautéing the finely diced onion until soft and translucent takes about 6 to 8 minutes.

- 2. Bloom the turmeric for thirty seconds before frying the tomato paste.**

Sprinkle the turmeric directly over the onions. Add the tomato paste to the center of the pan and fry for a minute or two to cook out the raw, canned flavor and dye the oil a brilliant red.

- 3. Stir in the tomatoes, salt, and pepper, and cook until all the water completely evaporates.**

Turn the heat to medium-high and do not rush this step. It takes 7 to 10 minutes for the mixture to thicken into a jammy paste where the wet boiling sound shifts to a sharp crackle and the red oil separates. If the tomatoes are still watery when the eggs hit the pan, they will boil instead of fry, resulting in an unpleasant sulfurous odor.

- 4. Pour the lightly beaten eggs evenly over the concentrated tomato mixture and lower the heat to medium-low.**

Let the eggs sit undisturbed for up to a minute so the whites barely set at the edges.

1. Gently fold and scramble the eggs into the sauce until just cooked through.

Stir gently for 2 to 3 minutes until the eggs are soft and luxurious, taking on a vibrant orange-pink hue. Remove from heat immediately so they do not overcook.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Serve straight from the skillet.**

Tear off pieces of warm flatbread like sangak or barbari, and serve alongside fresh herbs like sweet basil and mint, plus raw white onion wedges for the ultimate tea-house experience.



Eshkeneh

اشکنه

esh-ke-neh

In the sprawling canon of Persian cooking, where stews simmer for hours, Eshkeneh is the ancestral answer to fast food. Originating in the harsh winters of Khorasan, it transforms humble pantry staples—onions, flour, potatoes, and eggs—into a golden, deeply savory bowl of comfort in under an hour. The secret isn't a rich bone broth, but technique: taking the time to properly caramelize the onions, toasting the flour directly in the fat to build a nutty base, and flashing the dried fenugreek for exactly thirty seconds so it releases its maple-like aroma

without turning bitter. It's the ultimate, accessible taste of the homeland, requiring nothing more than a Tuesday night and a heavy pot.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	2 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and diced into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
2 tbsp	All-Purpose flour	4 large	eggs
1 tbsp	dried fenugreek leaves	2 tbsp	fresh lemon juice
4 cup	boiling water		

PREPARATION

- **Boil the water in advance.**

Have your 4 cups of boiling water measured and ready before you start toasting the fenugreek, so you can stop the frying process immediately.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Caramelize the onions slowly.**

Heat the oil in a medium, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, add the onion, and sauté patiently until deeply golden brown and caramelized, about 10 to 12 minutes. Don't rush this; the sweet allium backbone is what makes the soup work without meat.

- 2. Toast the flour and turmeric.**

Sprinkle the turmeric and flour over the golden onions. Stir constantly for 1 to 2 minutes until the raw flour smell cooks off and the mixture smells nutty.

1. Flash the fenugreek in the hot fat for exactly thirty seconds.

Add the dried fenugreek leaves and stir constantly for no more than 30 to 45 seconds. Do not let it linger, or the herb will burn and turn the entire pot irreversibly bitter.

2. Pour in the boiling water and simmer the potatoes.

Immediately pour in the boiling water to stop the frying process. Scrape the bottom of the pot to dissolve the flour into a smooth broth, then add the potatoes, salt, and pepper. Simmer covered on medium-low for 15 to 20 minutes until the potatoes are tender.

3. Cook the eggs directly in the simmering broth.

Taste and adjust the salt. For delicate ribbons, lightly whisk the eggs and drizzle them in while stirring slowly. For hearty individual portions, crack the eggs directly into the gently simmering broth, cover, and let poach for 3 to 5 minutes without stirring.

4. Brighten with lemon juice off the heat.

Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the fresh lemon juice to cut the richness of the egg and flour. Taste one last time before serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Serve with flatbread and fresh herbs.**

Tear pieces of toasted rustic sourdough or Sangak directly into the hot broth. Serve with a vibrant platter of fresh mint, cilantro, radishes, and raw white onion to contrast the earthy richness.

● **Use dried fenugreek leaves, never seeds.**

If your supermarket doesn't have a Middle Eastern section, check the Indian spice aisle for "Kasuri Methi." Do not substitute with fenugreek seeds; they will ruin the texture and flavor.



Kashk-e Bademjan

کشک بادمجان

kashk-e ba-dem-jan

The smell of caramelized onions, garlic, and bloomed mint is the unmistakable signal that a Persian feast is imminent. Traditionally, making Kashk-e Bademjan required hours of standing over sputtering oil to pan-fry heavily salted eggplants. This pragmatic adaptation captures that exact smoky, deeply savory flavor by high-heat roasting Chinese eggplants instead. Paired with the essential lactic tang of kashk and the vital crunch of walnuts to balance the dish's culinary energy, it is a vibrant, soulful dip that demands the center of the table.

INGREDIENTS

6 med	Chinese eggplant <i>halved lengthwise and scored</i>	1/3 cup	walnuts <i>chopped and toasted</i>
1/4 cup	extra-virgin olive oil	2 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
1 large	yellow onion <i>diced</i>	2 tbsp	dried mint
5 med	garlic clove <i>minced</i>	1 small	yellow onion <i>thinly sliced into half-moons and fried until crispy</i>
1 tsp	ground turmeric	2 med	garlic clove <i>thinly sliced and fried until crispy</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper	2 tbsp	walnuts <i>chopped</i>
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 tbsp	liquid kashk <i>thinned with a teaspoon of water</i>
1/3 cup	hot water		
1/2 cup	liquid kashk		

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the oven to 425°F.**
Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Brush the scored eggplant halves generously with olive oil and roast face-down for 35 to 45 minutes.**
They should look wrinkled, collapsed, and completely tender. Once cool enough to handle, scoop the creamy flesh into a bowl and discard the skins.
- 2. Heat a quarter cup of olive oil in a wide skillet over medium heat and cook the diced onion until deeply golden brown.**
This takes about 15 to 20 minutes and provides the crucial underlying sweetness. Add the minced garlic, turmeric, and black pepper, stirring constantly for one minute until fragrant.

1. **Add the roasted eggplant to the skillet and aggressively mash it into the onion mixture with a wooden spoon or potato masher.**

Avoid the temptation to use a food processor, as the dish requires a rustic, chunky texture rather than a smooth puree.

2. **Stir in the hot water, the toasted walnuts, and the half cup of kashk, then cover and simmer gently on medium-low for 15 minutes.**

This allows the tangy kashk to permeate the eggplant while the excess moisture evaporates. Taste for seasoning, keeping in mind that kashk is naturally quite salty.

3. **Warm two tablespoons of olive oil in a very small pan over medium-low heat, immediately remove from heat, and swirl in the dried mint for ten seconds.**

This is the most critical step of the entire recipe; if the mint stays on the heat too long, it will burn and introduce an irreversible bitterness to the dish.

4. **Spread the warm dip onto a serving platter and garnish with the bloomed mint oil, remaining walnuts, and fried aromatics.**

Create shallow swoops with the back of a spoon to catch the mint oil, crispy sliced onions, fried garlic, and a delicate drizzle of thinned kashk.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Replicate the distinctive tang of kashk using common supermarket dairy if the real thing is hard to source.**

Whisk together a quarter cup of thick whole-milk Greek yogurt, a quarter cup of full-fat sour cream, half a teaspoon of fine salt, and a tablespoon of fresh lemon juice.

- **Do not skip the walnuts.**

In traditional Persian humoral medicine, eggplant and dairy are considered cold ingredients; walnuts bring a necessary warm energy to balance the dish, alongside vital textural crunch.

- **Seek out Chinese or Japanese eggplants to save time and effort.**

Standard American globe eggplants are watery and bitter, requiring a mandatory heavy salting step. Asian varieties have thinner skins and fewer seeds, making them perfect for quick roasting.



Sobhaneh & Asrooneh (The Rhythms of Morning and Afternoon)

Highlighting the comforting simplicity of traditional Persian breakfasts and the essential afternoon snack rituals that bridge the gap between school, work, and a late dinner.

Morning in an Iranian household isn't a chaotic culinary performance. It's a quiet, rhythmic assembly of essentials. Boiling water hitting loose-leaf tea. The sharp tang of feta against the earthy crunch of walnuts and a fistful of fresh

herbs. It's an unapologetic wake-up call, softened only by the sticky brilliance of proper sour cherry jam smeared on warm flatbread. No fluff, no pretense. Just pure, functional perfection to start the day.

Then comes the afternoon stretch—the hollow hours between school, work, and a reliably late dinner. Enter the asrooneh. It's the post-work exhale, the homework-hour lifeline. A handful of salted nuts, crisp cucumbers, fruit meticulously peeled by a mother wielding a paring knife with surgical precision, and, invariably, more tea. It's a ritual of survival and sanity, a daily, grounding pause that forces everyone to stop, sit down, and taste something real.





Nimroo ba Khorma

نیمرو با خرما

neem-roo ba khor-ma

For those who grew up waking to the smell of browning butter and caramelizing sugar in an Ohio suburb, Nimroo ba Khorma was the undeniable scent of the weekend. This lightning-fast staple of the Iranian morning table operates on flawless, uncompromising logic: the intense, syrupy sweetness of soft dates mellowed by rich butter, grounded by savory eggs, and snapped into focus with a pinch of salt. Forget the fussy diaspora food blogs instructing you to separate yolks and whites for presentation. An Iranian grandmother's only real secret

is heat management. Keep the pan medium-low so the sugars melt instead of scorching, and crack the eggs right on top. It takes ten minutes, and it tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

6 large	Medjool dates <i>pitted and torn in half</i>	1/4 tsp	kosher salt
2 tbsp	unsalted butter or ghee	1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
4 large	eggs	2 tbsp	toasted walnuts <i>roughly chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Revive dry dates.**

If your dates have been sitting in the pantry for a month and feel a bit stiff, drop them in a bowl of hot tap water for 5 minutes, then drain and pat dry. This restores the luscious moisture needed for them to properly melt into the butter.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Melt the fat.**

Place a medium non-stick skillet over medium-low heat and add the butter or ghee.

- 2. Gently caramelize the dates.**

Once the butter is foaming, scatter the halved dates into the pan, cut-side down. Let them sizzle gently for 2 to 3 minutes, pressing lightly with the back of a spoon until they soften and release their dark syrup into the pan. Do not turn up the heat, or the natural sugars will scorch and turn bitter.

- 3. Fry the eggs.**

Arrange the softened dates evenly around the pan. Carefully crack the eggs directly into the spaces between the dates.

1. Steam and set.

Sprinkle the kosher salt directly over the egg yolks to balance the sweetness of the dates. Place a lid on the skillet and let it cook for 1 to 2 minutes, just until the whites are opaque and set, leaving the yolks vibrant and jammy.

2. Garnish and serve.

Remove from the heat and immediately dust with ground cinnamon and chopped walnuts. Bring the whole skillet straight to the table and serve with warm flatbread.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Tabrizi crunch.**

While some southern regions serve this dish strictly with eggs and dates, the addition of walnuts and cinnamon hails from the northwestern adaptation known as Gheysava. It is highly recommended to provide a necessary earthy, astringent crunch that cuts right through the intense sweetness of the dates.



Quick-Simmered Adasi

عدسی

a-da-si

The secret to this quintessential Iranian morning staple isn't a massive list of obscure spices, but a simple, old-world trick of texture. Adasi is the institution of the local coffeehouse, a deeply nourishing, velvety bowl built entirely from humble pantry staples. The magic lies in creating a rich, creamy viscosity—known as *la'ab-dar*—by toasting a spoonful of flour with caramelized onions and bloomed turmeric. It is an unpretentious, weeknight-friendly comfort food that tastes exactly like a crisp morning in Tehran, requiring nothing more than a squeeze of fresh lemon and a piece of warm flatbread to bring its earthy flavors to life.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	dry green or brown lentils <i>rinsed</i>	1 tbsp	all-purpose flour
3 tbsp	olive oil	5 cup	water
1 tbsp	unsalted butter	1 med	Russet or Yukon Gold potato <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1 tsp	golpar or ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp	ground black pepper	1 med	lemon <i>cut into wedges</i>
1 tbsp	tomato paste	2 large	flatbread <i>warmed</i>

PREPARATION

- **Soak the lentils in cold water for at least thirty minutes.**

Place the rinsed lentils in a bowl and cover with an inch of cold water. This old-school move removes compounds that cause bloating and keeps the lentils from muddying the color of the final broth. Drain before using.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Slowly sauté the diced onion in the oil and butter until it turns a light, shimmering gold.**

Use a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Take your time here; about 10 minutes of slow caramelization builds the sweet, foundational flavor of the stew.

- 2. Stir in the turmeric and black pepper, then fry the tomato paste and toast the flour.**

Cook the spices for 30 seconds until highly fragrant. Push the onions to the side of the pot, add the tomato paste to the center, and fry it in the oil for a minute or two to kill its harsh, raw tinny flavor. Sprinkle the flour over everything and stir continuously for 1 minute to cook out the raw flour taste. This specific sequence is the trick that yields the famous velvety la'ab-dar texture.

- 1. Add the drained lentils and water, then bring the pot to a gentle simmer.**
Stir to coat the lentils in the aromatic base, pour in the water, bring to a quick boil, then immediately drop the heat to low and cover.
- 2. Add the cubed potatoes after fifteen minutes and simmer until tender.**
Adding the potatoes halfway through the cook ensures they become perfectly soft without disintegrating into total mush. Simmer covered for another 25 to 30 minutes.
- 3. Season with salt and mash a few potatoes against the side of the pot to thicken the stew.**
If the stew is too thick, add a splash of boiling water. Use the back of your spoon to crush a few potato cubes into the broth, then let it simmer uncovered for 5 final minutes to lock in that creamy consistency.
- 4. Ladle into bowls and finish with a dusting of golpar, a drizzle of olive oil, and a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.**
The last-second hit of fresh acid brings the earthy bowl entirely to life. Serve immediately with warm flatbread.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Never salt your lentils early.**
Do not add salt until the lentils and potatoes are completely tender, otherwise the lentil skins will harden and remain stubbornly tough no matter how long you boil them.
- **The coffeehouse finish.**
Golpar (Persian angelica powder) has a nostalgic, slightly citrusy aroma that defines street-side Persian food. If you cannot source it at a local Middle Eastern market, simply swap in a dusting of ground cinnamon just before eating.



Khagineh

خاگینه

kha-gee-neh

In the quiet hours of an Iranian morning, the smell of saffron, cardamom, and melting butter is how you know someone loves you. Khagineh is a brilliant culinary sleight of hand—somewhere between a fluffy crepe and a decadent dessert, historically served to newlyweds for energy and sweetness. For first-generation kids growing up in the American suburbs, it was the ultimate weekend treat. The magic relies on two grandmother-approved secrets you won't find in French technique: a foolproof one-to-one ratio of eggs to flour to thick yogurt,

and the absolute necessity of thermal shock. You must pour cooled syrup over a piping hot crepe to ensure it drinks up the fragrance without turning to mush. It is a perfect, unpretentious bite of home.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	granulated sugar	1 tsp	baking powder
1/2 cup	water	1/4 tsp	vanilla extract
2	green cardamom pods <i>cracked</i>	1 pinch	salt
1 tbsp	rosewater	2 tbsp	unsalted butter
1 pinch	saffron threads	1/4 cup	walnuts <i>finely chopped</i>
3 large	eggs <i>at room temperature</i>	1 tsp	ground cinnamon
3 tbsp	all-purpose flour	1 tsp	dried edible rose petals <i>crushed</i>
3 tbsp	plain full-fat Greek yogurt		

PREPARATION

- **Bloom the saffron.**

Grind the pinch of saffron threads in a mortar with a tiny pinch of sugar to create friction, then steep in 1 teaspoon of warm water for 10 minutes. This yields an intense color and flavor you will never get by dropping dry threads directly into a pot.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Simmer the fragrant syrup and let it cool completely.**

Combine the sugar, water, and cracked cardamom in a small saucepan over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat, stir in the rosewater and bloomed saffron, and set aside to cool. This must be completely cold to shock the hot batter later.

1. Whip the eggs into a pale, frothy base.

In a mixing bowl, vigorously whisk the eggs and vanilla for about two minutes. This heavy aeration guarantees a light texture and cooks out any residual eggy aroma.

2. Fold in the thick yogurt and dry ingredients.

Whisk in the Greek yogurt until smooth. Sprinkle the flour, baking powder, and a tiny pinch of salt over the top, gently folding just until the flour is incorporated. Overmixing will make the crepe tough.

3. Fry the crepe gently under a lid.

Melt the butter in a 9-inch or 10-inch non-stick skillet over medium heat. Pour in the batter, tilting the pan to coat the bottom entirely. Cover with a lid and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until the edges are golden and the center sets.

4. Flip the khagineh and garnish the surface.

Use a wide spatula to carefully flip the crepe. Immediately scatter the chopped walnuts, cinnamon, and rose petals evenly across the top, letting the bottom brown for another 2 minutes.

5. Shock the hot crepe with the cooled syrup.

Turn the heat to the lowest setting. Remove the cardamom pods from your cooled syrup, then slowly pour it over the piping hot khagineh. It will sizzle beautifully. Let it simmer gently for 1 to 2 minutes so the hot batter drinks up the cool liquid like a sponge.

6. Slice into wedges and serve immediately.

Turn off the heat. Cut the khagineh right in the pan into pizza-like wedges, plate them, and pour over any remaining syrup. Serve hot alongside a glass of black Persian tea.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Don't skimp on the yogurt.**

Standard American plain yogurt is too watery for this. You need full-fat Greek yogurt to mimic the thick 'mast-e seft' of an Iranian kitchen and deliver the right tender crumb without requiring extra flour.



Fereni

فرنی

feh-reh-nee

There is a quiet, meditative magic to Fereni. It's the ultimate Persian comfort food—a minimalist alchemy of milk, rice flour, and sugar that bridges a cold weekend breakfast and a late-afternoon reprieve. The secret to its silken texture isn't fancy equipment, but patience. You whisk the flour into bone-cold milk, coax it over gentle heat without ever stepping away, and finish with rose water only after the fire is out so the delicate floral oils don't turn bitter. It's unpretentious, grandmother-approved perfection.

INGREDIENTS

4 cup	whole milk <i>refrigerator-cold</i>	2 tbsp	rose water
4 tbsp	fine white rice flour	1/8 tsp	ground cinnamon
4 tbsp	granulated white sugar	1 tbsp	unsalted pistachios <i>finely chopped</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cardamom		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Dissolve the rice flour into the cold milk.**
In a heavy-bottomed saucepan off the heat, sprinkle the rice flour over the cold milk and whisk vigorously until absolutely smooth and lump-free.
- 2. Whisk in the sugar and cardamom.**
Add the sugar and ground cardamom to the cold slurry, mixing until mostly dissolved.
- 3. Cook gently and stir continuously.**
Place the saucepan over medium-low heat and whisk continuously, scraping the bottom and sides. Do not walk away; stopping even briefly will cause the flour to clump.
- 4. Thicken the pudding.**
After 15 to 25 minutes, the mixture will steam and thicken to the consistency of loose yogurt. It will continue to firm up significantly as it cools, so don't wait for it to become a paste on the stove.
- 5. Add the rose water off the heat.**
Immediately remove the pan from the heat and stir in the rose water to lock in the volatile floral oils without letting them boil away and turn bitter.

1. **Pour and set.**

Ladle the hot Fereni into four serving bowls immediately so it doesn't set in the shape of the pot. Let it rest at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes until a slight skin forms on the surface.

2. **Garnish and serve.**

Decorate the stabilized surface with a pinch of cinnamon and the chopped pistachios. Serve warm, or chill to serve cold later.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Don't rush the heat.**

Cranking the burner thickens the milk before the starches properly hydrate, leaving you with a gritty, raw flour taste. Keep it low and slow.

- **Prevent weeping.**

If saving for later, let the bowls cool completely on the counter before covering and chilling. Hot pudding in the fridge creates condensation that drips back down and ruins the silky texture.

- **The Isfahani variation.**

For a brilliant regional twist, use 2 tablespoons of rice flour and 2 tablespoons of cornstarch, and skip the sugar entirely during cooking. Serve the pristine white pudding with a small jug of date or grape syrup for everyone to pour over their own bowls at the table.



Nargesi-e Esfenaj

نرگسی اسفناج

nar-geh-see-ye es-feh-naj

Named for the daffodil—the way the brilliant egg yolks rest on a bed of dark green leaves—this is the ultimate Caspian Sea weeknight secret. You'll find plenty of modern recipes trying to dress it up with saffron, or worse, boiling the life out of the spinach in a cup of water. Don't do that. The magic here is the grandmother's trick: letting the greens slowly collapse in their own juices. It's rustic, cheap, and deeply restorative food that demands nothing more than patience and a single pan.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	fresh flat-leaf spinach <i>washed, left wet, and roughly chopped</i>	1 tsp	ground turmeric
3 tbsp	neutral vegetable oil	1/2 tsp	black pepper
2 med	yellow onions <i>thinly sliced</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
4 cloves	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	4 large	large eggs

PREPARATION

- **Retain the washing water.**

When washing your spinach, do not dry it in a salad spinner. The water clinging to the leaves is the crucial element for steaming it properly without diluting its flavor.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Wilt the greens in their own moisture.**

Place the wet, chopped spinach into a large pot with a tight-fitting lid over medium-low heat. Add absolutely no water; the residual washing water and the greens' own juices are all you need to perfectly steam them down in about 10 to 15 minutes.

- 2. Caramelize the onions patiently.**

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat, add the sliced onions, and fry them until they are deeply golden and sweet—about 10 to 12 minutes. This provides the structural sweetness that balances the earthy spinach.

- 3. Bloom the aromatics.**

Drop the heat to low and stir in the minced garlic, turmeric, and black pepper. Sauté for exactly one minute, just until the garlic is fragrant but nowhere near brown.

1. Marry the spinach and the spiced oil.

Add the wilted spinach to the skillet, stirring well to coat the greens. Season with the kosher salt and cook for 3 minutes to meld the flavors.

2. Nestle the eggs to create the narcissus effect.

Use the back of a spoon to create four shallow wells in the spinach mixture and crack one egg directly into each. Do not stir. Cover the skillet and cook on low heat for 5 to 7 minutes until the whites are fully set but the yolks remain luxuriously runny.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Caspian variations.**

To capture the deeper Northern Iranian flavor profile, try scattering 2 tablespoons of chopped walnuts over the top before serving, or stir 1 tablespoon of pomegranate molasses into the spinach just before adding the eggs for a tart edge.

● **Using baby spinach.**

If you're utilizing a clamshell of American supermarket baby spinach, skip the chopping. Keep an eye on it in the pot; it will wilt much faster, usually in just 3 to 5 minutes.



Sandevich-e Tokhm-e Morgh

ساندویچ تخم مرغ

san-de-veech-e tokh-me morgh

In the 1980s, amidst rationing and the chaos of the Iran-Iraq war, this sandwich was the undisputed king of the afternoon school buffet. It is not the gloppy, mayonnaise-drenched egg salad of the American deli; it is a stripped-down, brilliant study in texture. Slices of perfectly boiled egg, the sharp brine of kosher dill pickles—never sweet—and juicy tomatoes are tucked into a soft, airy roll. It is the nostalgic taste of the Tehrani streets, perfectly reproducible in your own kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

4 large eggs

2 large soft ciabatta or Italian hero rolls

2 tbsp	unsalted butter or full-fat mayonnaise <i>softened</i>	1 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley and scallions <i>roughly chopped</i>
2 med	vine-ripened tomatoes <i>sliced thin</i>	1 tsp	sea salt
4 med	kosher dill pickles <i>sliced lengthwise</i>	1/2 tsp	freshly ground black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Prepare an ice bath for the eggs.**

Fill a medium bowl with cold water and ice cubes so it is ready the moment the eggs finish boiling.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Gently lower the eggs into boiling water and cook for exactly nine minutes.**
We want a firm, vibrantly yellow yolk, avoiding the dreaded chalky grey ring at all costs; immediately transfer them to the ice bath to stop the cooking, then peel and slice into thin rounds.
- 2. Slice the rolls open and hollow out the bread to create a pocket.**
Pull out a little bit of the excess fluffy crumb from the top half, an essential trick from Iranian sandwich shops that keeps the bread from overwhelming the slippery filling.
- 3. Spread a thin layer of butter or mayonnaise on both sides of the bread.**
This fat acts as a crucial barrier so the tomato juices do not turn the roll into a soggy, structural failure.
- 4. Layer the sliced eggs onto the bottom bun and season aggressively with salt and black pepper.**
- 5. Shingle the sliced tomatoes and the salty dill pickles directly over the seasoned eggs.**
- 6. Pile the fresh herbs high, close the sandwich, press down gently to compress the layers, and slice in half.**

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Tabrizi Stone-Baked Potato and Egg (Yeralma Yumurta)**

While Tehran mastered the Bolki sandwich, the Northwestern Turkish-speaking regions perfected an earthy street food variation. To make it at home, roast a Russet potato until crisp, then aggressively mash it piping hot on a piece of lavash flatbread with a hot boiled egg, a tablespoon of butter, salt, pepper, and a crucial teaspoon of dried mint before rolling it tightly like a burrito.



Berenj & Tahdig (The Sacred Art of Persian Rice)

Demystifying the intimidating process of making perfectly fluffy basmati rice and its coveted, crispy golden crust using standard non-stick pots found in any American kitchen.

In a Persian household, rice is not a side dish. It is an altar. It's the metric by which every home cook is quietly, ruthlessly judged. We're talking about chelo —steaming mountains of impossibly fluffy, saffron-stained basmati concealing

the real prize at the bottom of the pot: tahdig. That shattering, golden crust of fried starch has a way of turning otherwise civilized relatives into feral scavengers the moment the platter hits the table. It's a sacred art, often spoken of with the kind of anxiety usually reserved for defusing a bomb.

But here's the dirty secret nobody mentions: you don't need an ancient, imported cauldron to pull it off. A standard non-stick pot from an American big-box store, a clean kitchen towel wrapped around the lid, and a little nerve are all it takes to flip a masterpiece. What follows is the unvarnished roadmap to the perfect grain, the potato crust of your childhood, and the Tuesday-night hacks that keep the tradition alive without losing your mind.





Kateh

کته

kah-TEH

Chelow gets all the glory at weddings, but Kateh is the warm, unsung workhorse of the Iranian home. Born in the lush, rainy provinces along the Caspian Sea, this single-pot method skips the parboiling and draining, trapping every bit of aroma and starch right where it belongs. It is the ultimate weeknight hack for the diaspora cook coming home late, craving the unmistakable scent of the motherland. You don't even need measuring cups—just a flick of the wrist, a little butter, and your index finger.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	high-quality long-grain basmati rice	1 tsp	fine sea salt
3 cup	cold water <i>or enough to reach 1 1/2 knuckles above the rice</i>	2 tbsp	neutral vegetable oil
		2 tbsp	unsalted butter

PREPARATION

- **Wash the rice gently without kneading.**

Swirl the basmati in cold water and pour off the cloudy liquid, repeating three to four times until relatively clear. Never aggressively squeeze, rub, or knead the grains; breaking them releases excess starch and will turn the final dish into porridge.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Level the rice and measure the water using the knuckle trick.**

Place the washed rice in a medium non-stick pot and smooth it flat. Rest your index finger gently on top of the rice layer and pour in cold water until it reaches exactly one and a half knuckles above the grains.

- 2. Bring the pot to a vigorous boil.**

Add the salt, oil, and butter directly to the water and set the pot uncovered over medium-high heat, skimming off and discarding any starchy foam that rises to the surface.

- 3. Wait for craters to form in the rice, then build a mountain.**

After 8 to 12 minutes, the water level will drop below the surface of the rice, forming visible bubbling holes. When the surface looks mostly dry but you can still hear boiling at the bottom, gently mound the rice into a center cone and poke four or five vertical holes down to the bottom using the handle of a wooden spoon.

1. Wrap the lid in a towel and steam on low.

Reduce the heat to the lowest possible simmer, wrap your pot lid tightly in a clean cotton dish towel—tying the ends securely at the top so they do not catch fire—and cover the pot so the cloth can absorb all condensation.

2. Leave the pot entirely undisturbed to form the tahdig.

Let it cook for 35 to 40 minutes while the starches and fats fry the bottom layer into a golden crust. Gently scoop out the fluffy rice, taking care not to crush the grains, then use a spatula to release the crispy tahdig to serve alongside.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The grandmother's knuckle trick adapts to the grain.**

Because American basmati is dense, it requires water measuring one and a half knuckles above the rice. If you happen to source authentic, delicate Iranian rice like Taron, only fill the water to a single knuckle.

● **You can soak the rice if you have time.**

While you can skip it on a busy weeknight, letting the washed rice soak in lukewarm water for 15 to 20 minutes before cooking allows the dense basmati grains to relax and yield a fluffier final texture.



The Tortilla Tahdig Hack

ته دیگ نان

Tahdig-e Nan

If you grew up in a Persian household, you know the sound: the clatter of a serving spoon, the sudden hush at the table, the collective holding of breath as the rice pot is flipped. Tahdig—the golden, shatteringly crisp bottom of the pot—was born as a frugal meal for Qajar dynasty servants before a king tasted it and declared it a royal obsession. Back in Iran, grandmothers masterfully layer fresh, paper-thin lavash, but let's be honest: the packaged lavash at an Ohio supermarket is dry, brittle, and tears when forced into a round pan. Enter the flour tortilla. An eight-inch supermarket tortilla drops perfectly into a saucepan, holding exactly the right moisture to fry into a glorious disc of savory

perfection. Combined with a genius splash of water in the hot oil to prevent tooth-breaking hardness, it is a fool-proof, weeknight-friendly technique that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

3 cup	long grain basmati rice	1 tbsp	water
1/4 cup	kosher salt	1 tbsp	bloomed saffron water
3 tbsp	vegetable oil	1 large	white flour tortilla
1 tbsp	unsalted butter		

PREPARATION

- **Bloom the saffron.**

If using the optional saffron water, steep a pinch of ground saffron in a tablespoon of warm water for a few minutes before you begin cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Wash the rice thoroughly until the water runs mostly clear.**

Place the basmati in a large bowl, fill with cold water, and gently swish the grains with your hands to release the surface starch. Pour out the cloudy water and repeat three or four times; if you skip this, your rice will turn into a sticky paste instead of distinct, fluffy grains.

- 2. Parboil the rice in heavily salted water.**

Bring a large pot filled with 8 cups of water to a rolling boil over high heat, then add the salt and the rinsed rice. Boil vigorously, uncovered, for 7 to 10 minutes until a grain is soft on the outside but still has a firm, raw bite in the absolute center, then immediately drain into a fine-mesh colander and rinse gently with cold water.

1. Build the foundation of fat and water in your cooking pot.

Dry a 5-to-6-quart non-stick pot completely and place it over medium heat. Add the vegetable oil, butter, saffron water, and exactly one tablespoon of plain water—a grandmother trick that keeps the bread tender-crisp rather than rigid.

2. Lay down the tortilla and build the rice mountain.

Once the butter melts and sizzles, place the flour tortilla flat onto the bottom of the pot so it covers the surface entirely. Gently scoop the parboiled rice over the tortilla, piling it loosely into a center pyramid so it doesn't touch the hot walls and burn.

3. Poke steam chimneys into the rice mountain.

Using the handle of a wooden spoon or spatula, poke four to five holes deep into the rice, going all the way down to the tortilla to allow steam to escape from the bottom up.

4. Wrap the lid in a towel and steam undisturbed.

Wrap the lid of your pot tightly in a clean cotton kitchen towel, securing the ends over the top handle so they don't catch fire. Keep the heat on medium-high for about 5 to 7 minutes until you see steam and hear a lively sizzle, then immediately drop the heat to medium-low and let it steam without lifting the lid for 45 to 50 minutes.

5. Shock the pan in cold water to release the crust.

Turn off the heat and carefully place the bottom of the hot pot into a sink filled with an inch of cold water for 60 seconds. This thermal shock forces the metal to cleanly release the tahdig intact.

6. Flip the pot onto a platter to serve.

Place a large round platter upside down over the open pot, hold the handles tightly, take a deep breath, and confidently flip the whole thing over to reveal the golden crust.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skimp on the salt during the parboil.**

A quarter cup seems absurd, but the boiling water must taste like the sea to properly season the rice, and most of it drains away in the sink.

- **Stick to basmati.**

Do not substitute short grain or jasmine rice; long-grain basmati is absolutely essential for the fluffy, separated grains characteristic of proper Persian rice.

- **Use the right pot.**

A heavy-bottomed, 5-to-6-quart non-stick saucepan is critical. The non-stick surface is required for the release, and this exact size perfectly fits an 8-inch tortilla.



Express Baghali Polo

باقالی پلو

ba-gha-lee po-lo

A proper banquet-style baghali polo requires hours of shelling fresh fava beans and slow-braising lamb shanks—a glorious undertaking, but a mathematical impossibility for a working parent on a Tuesday in Ohio. Faced with this reality, the Iranian-American grandmother doesn't compromise; she adapts. This express version relies on the domestic "kateh" absorption method, utilizing frozen baby lima beans, dried dill, and quick pan-fried spiced meatballs to recreate the exact olfactory blueprint of a Tehran kitchen. It is not a shortcut, but an

authentic, unapologetic testament to diaspora ingenuity that yields perfectly separated grains, a shatteringly crisp tahdig, and the unmistakable, comforting taste of home.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	long-grain basmati rice <i>rinsed 3 to 5 times until water runs clear</i>	1/4 tsp	saffron threads <i>ground to a powder and bloomed in 2 tbsp hot water</i>
2 cup	frozen baby lima beans	1 lb	ground beef, veal, or lamb
1/2 cup	high-quality dried dill weed	1 large	yellow onion <i>finely grated, juice completely squeezed out and discarded</i>
3 tbsp	neutral oil	1 tsp	turmeric powder
2 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>cut into small cubes</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 large clove	garlic <i>smashed</i>		

PREPARATION

- **Wash the rice thoroughly.**

Rinsing the basmati rice under cold water 3 to 5 times until the water runs completely clear is mandatory to remove surface starch and prevent the grains from gluing together.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the ground meat, grated onion, turmeric, 1 tsp kosher salt, and black pepper in a mixing bowl.**

Knead vigorously with your hands for 2 to 3 minutes until the mixture becomes slightly tacky.

- 1. Pinch off small pieces and roll them into mini meatballs roughly the size of a large cherry.**

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, add the meatballs, and pan-fry for 8 to 10 minutes until deeply browned on all sides, then set aside.

- 2. Combine the washed rice, frozen lima beans, smashed garlic clove, 1 tbsp kosher salt, 3 tablespoons of neutral oil, and exactly 3 cups of water in a medium non-stick pot.**

A heavy-bottomed non-stick pot is essential here to build the perfect tahdig later.

- 3. Place the pot over high heat to bring to a vigorous boil, then gently stir in the dried dill.**

Keep the pot uncovered for this phase so the surface water can evaporate.

- 4. Allow the water to boil off rapidly until the surface liquid disappears and small steam craters form in the rice.**

The rice should look mostly dry on top but still sound wet at the bottom.

- 5. Poke four or five holes straight down through the rice to the bottom of the pot using the handle of a wooden spoon.**

This crucial step allows steam from the bottom to escape upward. Scatter the butter cubes evenly over the top of the rice.

- 6. Wrap the lid of your pot in a clean kitchen towel and place it tightly on the pot.**

The towel absorbs condensation so it doesn't drip back down and ruin the rice.

Reduce the heat to the absolute lowest setting and let it steam undisturbed for 35 to 45 minutes to form the crispy tahdig.

- 7. Remove the lid and gently scoop out about a half cup of the cooked rice from the top into a small bowl.**

Pour your bloomed saffron water over this small bowl of rice and mix gently until the grains are bright golden.

- 8. Fluff the remaining rice in the pot and mound it onto a platter in a loose pyramid.**

Scatter the golden saffron rice over the mound and arrange the hot spiced meatballs around the base.

1. Carefully pry the golden, crispy tahdig crust from the bottom of the non-stick pot.

Break it into shards and serve it proudly on a separate plate, or place it right at the apex of the rice mountain.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Use a high-quality non-stick pot.**

Teflon, ceramic, or hard-anodized aluminum is non-negotiable for ensuring the tahdig releases cleanly from the bottom.

● **Listen to your pot to monitor the tahdig.**

When the water evaporates, it sounds wet. Once covered on low heat, it should transition to a faint, rhythmic sizzle. If it sounds aggressive, your heat is too high.

● **Do not substitute fresh dill.**

Fresh dill introduces too much water into the precise absorption ratio of the kateh method, resulting in mushy, gummy rice.



Stovetop Skillet Tah-Cheen

ته چین

tah-cheen

Growing up, Tah-Cheen was the ultimate weekend showstopper—a savory, glowing golden cake of saffron rice layered with tender shredded chicken and tart barberries. But the modern internet is littered with shortcuts that Iranian grandmothers would rightfully scoff at, from baking it in a glass dish to drowning whole, watery eggs in rosewater. To achieve a structurally sound masterpiece with a shattering, crispy crust, you must return to the stove. By utilizing only egg yolks to banish any sulfuric odor and thick Greek yogurt to maintain the cake's integrity, this recipe resurrects the authentic taste of home for a standard weeknight.

INGREDIENTS

1 tsp	high-quality saffron threads <i>ground to a fine powder</i>	1/2 tsp	ground turmeric
1 small	ice cube	1/4 cup	kosher salt <i>plus 1 teaspoon for seasoning</i>
2 tbsp	boiling water	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1/2 cup	dried barberries <i>rinsed well</i>	3 cup	long-grain Basmati rice <i>washed in cold water until clear</i>
1 tbsp	granulated sugar	3 large	egg yolks
3/4 lb	boneless skinless chicken breast	1 cup	full-fat plain Greek yogurt
1/2 med	yellow onion <i>peeled and left intact</i>	5 tbsp	neutral oil <i>divided</i>
		3 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>divided</i>

PREPARATION

- **Bloom the saffron.**

Transfer the ground saffron to a small heatproof glass, add the ice cube and boiling water, and set aside. The temperature shock extracts the deepest crimson color.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Poach and shred the chicken.**

Submerge the chicken breast, onion half, turmeric, 1 teaspoon of salt, and black pepper in a small saucepan with just enough water to cover. Simmer covered on low heat for 30 to 40 minutes, then discard the liquid, shred the chicken entirely using two forks, and toss with 1 tablespoon of your bloomed saffron liquid.

- 2. Plump the barberries.**

Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a small skillet over medium-low heat, add the rinsed barberries and sugar, and sauté gently for 1 to 2 minutes until glossy and plump, then immediately remove from heat and mix half into the shredded chicken.

1. Parboil the rice to an al dente bite.

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil with 1/4 cup of kosher salt, add the rinsed rice, and boil briskly for 5 to 7 minutes until the grains are elongated but retain a firm, raw bite in the absolute center (zende), then drain and rinse quickly with lukewarm water.

2. Whisk the golden emulsion.

In a large bowl, vigorously whisk the egg yolks until pale to break down their proteins, then whisk in the Greek yogurt, 3 tablespoons of neutral oil, a pinch of salt, and the remaining saffron liquid before gently folding in the parboiled rice until every grain is coated.

3. Build the skillet architecture.

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil and 2 tablespoons of butter in a heavy-bottomed 10-inch non-stick skillet over medium heat. Spread half the saffron rice evenly across the bottom and press down firmly with the back of a spoon to compact it.

4. Add the filling with a protective border.

Spread the chicken and barberry mixture over the compressed rice, keeping it exactly 1 inch away from the edges of the pan to prevent the cake from splitting later.

5. Seal and form the crust.

Spoon the remaining rice over the chicken, press down firmly once again to compact the entire cake, and cook on medium-high heat for 5 minutes until you hear a lively sizzle from the bottom.

6. Steam slowly over low heat.

Once steam rises from the edges, wrap the skillet lid tightly in a clean kitchen towel to catch condensation, cover the pan securely, and reduce the heat to the absolute lowest setting to cook undisturbed for 50 to 60 minutes.

7. Invert and serve.

Turn off the heat, let the pan sit for 5 minutes to release the crust, then confidently invert the skillet over a large serving platter to drop the golden cake before garnishing with the remaining barberries.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Say no to egg whites.**

Resist the urge to use whole eggs to avoid waste; the sulfur compounds in the whites are entirely responsible for the foul, eggy odor and rubbery texture that plagues lesser adaptations.

- **Use a heat diffuser if your stove runs hot.**

American gas and electric ranges often struggle to maintain a low enough simmer. Placing a cheap metal heat diffuser under the skillet during the 60-minute steaming phase guarantees an even, perfectly golden tahdig without burning.



Express Adas Polo ba Khorma

عدس پلو با خرما

a-das po-lo ba khor-ma

There is a profound alchemy in Persian cooking that turns humble pantry staples into something majestic. This is the taste of an Iranian grandmother's kitchen, distilled for an American weeknight. By embracing the homestyle Kateh absorption method, we skip the fussy parboiling of the rice without sacrificing the fluffy, separate grains or the prized crispy tahdig. The magic here isn't just the earthy lentils or the fragrant hit of cinnamon and cumin—it's the Medjool dates and sultanas, blistered in butter until glossy, that elevate this simple dish into an absolute masterpiece.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	green or brown lentils <i>rinsed</i>	1/2 tsp	rose petal powder
2 cup	long-grain Basmati rice <i>rinsed until water runs completely clear</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
3 cup	water	2 large	yellow onions <i>thinly sliced</i>
2 tbsp	vegetable oil	12 med	Medjool dates <i>pitted and halved</i>
1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1/2 cup	sultanas or dark raisins
1 tsp	ground cinnamon	4 tbsp	unsalted butter
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	1/2 tsp	ground turmeric
1/2 tsp	ground coriander	1/4 tsp	ground saffron

PREPARATION

- **Soak the raisins.**

Submerge the sultanas in a small bowl of water for 15 minutes to plump, then drain thoroughly.

- **Bloom the saffron.**

Combine the ground saffron with 2 tablespoons of hot water in a small glass and set aside to steep.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Parboil the lentils until tender but firm.**

Cover the rinsed lentils with an inch of water in a small saucepan, bring to a boil, and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Drain and set aside, discarding the dark cooking water so it doesn't muddy the final color of the rice.

- 2. Combine the rice, lentils, and fresh water.**

In a large non-stick pot, combine the thoroughly rinsed Basmati rice, parboiled lentils, 3 cups of fresh water, vegetable oil, and kosher salt.

1. Boil away the water to initiate the Kateh method.

Bring the pot to a vigorous boil over medium-high heat, uncovered. Allow the water to boil off until it drops just below the surface of the rice and small steam craters begin to form.

2. Spice the rice and steam.

Sprinkle the cinnamon, cumin, coriander, rose petal powder, and black pepper evenly over the wet rice. Wrap the pot's lid tightly in a clean kitchen towel to catch condensation, cover the pot, drop the heat to the absolute lowest setting, and let it steam undisturbed for 45 minutes to build the tahdig.

3. Caramelize the onions.

While the rice steams, melt 2 tablespoons of butter with a splash of oil in a wide skillet over medium heat. Slowly fry the sliced onions until deeply golden and sticky, stirring in the turmeric during the final minute before setting them aside.

4. Blister the dates and raisins in butter.

In the same skillet, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter over medium-low heat. Briefly sauté the pitted dates and drained raisins for 1 to 2 minutes until glossy and plump, removing them from the heat immediately so they don't puff up and burn.

5. Assemble the majlasi platter.

Uncover the steamed rice and gently scoop a cup of the top layer into the bloomed saffron water, folding until vibrant yellow. Mound the remaining rice onto a platter, top with the caramelized onions, buttered dates, and raisins, then scatter the saffron rice over the top, serving the crispy tahdig on a separate plate.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **A note on humoral balance.**

The warming spices—cinnamon, cumin, and coriander—aren't just there for flavor. They neutralize the 'cold' digestive nature of the lentils and rice in traditional Iranian medicine.

- **Wash your rice properly.**

Rinsing the Basmati until the water runs completely clear is non-negotiable for achieving separate, fluffy grains in the Katch absorption method.

- **Do not skip frying the dates.**

Frying dates in butter unlocks a rich, savory-sweet dimension that turns them from a simple snack into the dish's majestic centerpiece.



Zereshk Polo Hack

زرشک پلو با مرغ ریش ریش

zereshk polo ba morgh-e rish rish

You remember the intoxicating scent of saffron and sweet-and-sour berries wafting through the house on Sunday afternoons. But now it's a chaotic Tuesday, you just got home from work, and people are hungry. Real Persian grandmothers know you don't always have to braise a bird for two hours. This is the morgh-e rish rish method—shredded chicken pulled from a supermarket rotisserie, swimming in a violently red, highly concentrated base of caramelized tomato paste and bloomed saffron. It's an honest, weeknight adaptation that respects the holy trinity of the dish without demanding your entire evening.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 tsp	saffron threads	1/2 tsp	ground turmeric
1/8 tsp	granulated sugar	2 tbsp	tomato paste
3 tbsp	hot water	1 cup	chicken broth
1 cup	dried barberries <i>picked over for stems and thoroughly rinsed</i>	1 tbsp	fresh lemon juice
2 tbsp	unsalted butter	3 cup	basmati rice <i>washed 3 to 5 times in cold water until water runs clear</i>
1 tbsp	granulated sugar	3 tbsp	vegetable oil
3 cup	cooked chicken <i>shredded from a rotisserie chicken, skin and bones discarded</i>	1 tbsp	water
2 tbsp	vegetable oil	2 tbsp	kosher salt
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Wash your rice thoroughly.**

Basmati must be rinsed until the water runs completely clear to remove surface starch, which guarantees the light, separated grains that define Persian cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Grind and bloom the saffron.**

Place the saffron threads and the 1/8 teaspoon of sugar in a mortar and grind into a fine powder. Transfer to a small bowl, pour in the hot water, and let it steep.

Never skip the grinding, or you're just wasting good saffron.

1. Parboil and steam the rice.

Bring 8 cups of water and the kosher salt to a rolling boil in a large non-stick pot. Add the washed rice and boil for 6 to 8 minutes until slightly soft outside but firm in the center. Drain, return the pot to the stove with 3 tablespoons of oil and 1 tablespoon of water, and mound the rice back in. Poke holes with a wooden spoon, cover tightly with a kitchen towel-wrapped lid, and steam on low for 35 to 40 minutes to build the tahdig.

2. Build the sauce base.

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet over medium heat and sauté the diced onion until golden and soft, about 6 to 8 minutes. Add the turmeric and stir for 30 seconds, then push the onions aside and fry the tomato paste directly in the oil for 2 minutes until it darkens to a rusty brick red and loses its raw edge.

3. Simmer the shredded chicken.

Fold the shredded rotisserie chicken into the skillet, coating every strand in the onion-tomato mixture. Pour in the chicken broth, 1 tablespoon of the bloomed saffron liquid, and the lemon juice, then lower the heat and let it gently bubble for 10 minutes so the meat drinks the sauce. Season with black pepper.

4. Plump the barberries.

In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt the butter and add the rinsed barberries and 1 tablespoon of sugar. Sauté gently for exactly 1 to 2 minutes until the sugar dissolves and the berries puff up like little jewels, then immediately remove from the heat and stir in 1 tablespoon of the bloomed saffron liquid. Do not walk away; burnt zereshk is violently bitter and will ruin your night.

5. Assemble the dish.

Fluff the steamed rice, then mix 1 cup of it in a small bowl with the remaining saffron liquid to create a vibrant yellow crown. Scoop the white rice onto a platter, arrange the saucy chicken around it, and top with the golden rice and the jeweled barberries, serving the crispy tahdig on a side plate.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Using a rotisserie chicken isn't cheating.**

Iranian grandmothers inherently value efficiency when feeding a family. The shredded meat maximizes surface area, allowing it to instantly absorb the authentic sauce.

- **Buy a large bag of zereshk and keep it in the freezer.**

It never goes bad, and it prevents you from ever having to rely on dried cranberries in a desperate pinch.



The Classic Sibzamini Tahdig

ته دیگ سیب زمینی

tah-deeg-e seeb-za-mee-nee

Rice in an Iranian household isn't a side dish—it's a religion. And its holy grail is the tahdig, the prized, golden crust that everyone at the dinner table fights over. For the diaspora kid who grew up watching their grandmother flip a massive pot to reveal a glistening crown of crispy potatoes, this feels like an intimidating magic trick. It isn't. Stripped of the myth-making, achieving that shattering crunch relies entirely on starch management, proper thermal pacing, and an unabashed embrace of cooking fat.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	Basmati rice <i>rinsed under cold water until completely clear</i>	1 tbsp	unsalted butter
2 tbsp	Kosher salt	1/4 tsp	saffron threads <i>ground</i>
1 large	Russet potato <i>peeled and sliced exactly 1/4-inch thick</i>	1/4 tsp	turmeric
3 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	1 pinch	salt

PREPARATION

- **Extract the surface starch.**

Soak the sliced potatoes in cold water for 10 to 15 minutes, then dry them aggressively with a clean towel to prevent sogginess and sticking.

- **Bloom the saffron cold.**

Sprinkle the ground saffron over 2 or 3 small ice cubes in a glass and let it melt at room temperature for a superior extraction of color and flavor.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Parboil the rice to al dente.**

Bring 8 cups of water and the Kosher salt to a rolling boil, then boil the rinsed rice like pasta for exactly 6 to 8 minutes until it is soft on the outside but retains a firm, opaque white dot in the center. Drain and rinse gently with cold water.

- 2. Prime the cooking vessel.**

Set a heavy-bottomed non-stick pot over medium heat, melt the butter into the oil, and stir in the turmeric, a pinch of salt, and half the bloomed saffron liquid.

- 3. Pre-sear the potato crust.**

Carefully arrange the dried potato slices in a slightly overlapping layer across the bottom of the pot. Fry them gently in the hot fat for 3 to 4 minutes without touching them to set the crust and guarantee a clean release.

1. Build the rice mountain.

Gently spoon the parboiled rice over the potatoes, piling it into a pyramid in the center. Use the handle of a wooden spoon to poke 4 or 5 deep holes straight down to the potatoes to create chimneys for the steam.

2. Trap the steam and wait.

Turn the heat to medium-high until you hear a lively sizzle and feel intense steam rising. Wrap the pot lid tightly in a clean kitchen towel, place it firmly on the pot, drop the heat to your lowest possible setting, and walk away for exactly 45 minutes.

3. Reveal the tahdig.

Gently scoop out the fluffy white rice onto a platter, toss a few spoonfuls with the remaining saffron for garnish, and carefully loosen the majestic, golden potato crust from the bottom of the pot to serve.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Respect the equipment.**

A heavy-bottomed Teflon or ceramic pot is non-negotiable for beginners, as is wrapping the lid tightly in a kitchen towel (the damkoni) to catch steam before it rains back onto the crust.

● **Navigate electric stoves.**

If cooking on electric coils, build your steam on one burner, then immediately move the pot to a second burner already set to low to prevent burning the crust during the cool-down lag.



The Weeknight Khoresh (Stovetop Magic for Busy Parents)

Adapting the majestic, complex, and time-consuming stews of Iran into manageable weeknight meals by utilizing smart preparation hacks without sacrificing their authentic soul.

A proper khoresh is traditionally an act of endurance—a slow, simmering testament to patience, built over hours until the oils pool at the surface and the ingredients surrender to one another. But modern life rarely affords the luxury

of a Tuesday afternoon spent tending a sputtering pot. This is where the real magic of the diaspora kitchen reveals itself. It lives in the hands of exhausted parents who refuse to let the soul of their heritage slip away to the convenience of takeout.

These are not the watered-down compromises of glossy food magazines; this is survival cooking with dignity. By leaning on smart prep, an aggressive oven roast for the eggplant, and the unapologetic utility of a heavy-bottomed pan, the deep, resonant notes of pomegranate, walnut, and fenugreek are wrestled into submission before the kids finish their homework. The tradition survives, the flavor remains uncompromising, and dinner gets on the table.





Gheymeh Rizeh Nokhodchi

قیمه ریزه نخودچی

gheymeh ree-zeh no-khod-chee

If you ask a local in Isfahan what tastes like home, they won't point you toward labor-intensive restaurant fare. They point to Gheymeh Rizeh. It is a masterpiece of weeknight economy—tender, bite-sized meatballs bound by roasted chickpea flour, simmering in a vibrant, mint-laced tomato broth. The magic lies in a few grandmotherly mandates: perfectly lean meat, aggressively squeezed onions, and a violent kneading process. Scented with turmeric and loaded with potatoes, this is the unembellished, deeply comforting soul of the Persian domestic kitchen, translated seamlessly for a chaotic Tuesday night in America.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	very lean ground beef	3 tbsp	neutral oil
1 med	yellow onion <i>peeled, finely grated, and squeezed fiercely to remove all juice</i>	1 large	yellow onion <i>peeled and finely diced</i>
1/2 cup	roasted chickpea flour	1 tsp	ground turmeric
1 tbsp	dried mint	3 tbsp	tomato paste
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 tbsp	dried mint
1/2 tsp	ground black pepper	1 large	russet potato <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
1/2 tsp	ground turmeric	4 cup	boiling water
		1 tbsp	fresh lemon juice

PREPARATION

- **Toast standard garbanzo bean flour if Persian roasted chickpea flour is unavailable.**

Authentic Aard-e Nokhodchi is made from roasted chickpeas. If you are using raw garbanzo bean flour from a standard American supermarket, toast it in a dry skillet over medium-low heat for 3 to 5 minutes until it smells nutty, then let it cool completely before mixing it into the meat.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the meatball ingredients and knead them vigorously.**

In a large bowl, mix the lean ground beef, the squeezed onion pulp, the roasted chickpea flour, 1 tablespoon of dried mint, salt, black pepper, and 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric. Wet your hands and knead the mixture for 5 to 8 minutes until it becomes cohesive, slightly paler in color, and sticky to the touch. This physical manipulation activates the proteins, ensuring the meatballs will not disintegrate in the broth.

- 1. Rest the meat mixture in the refrigerator to hydrate the chickpea flour.**

Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes. This allows the chickpea flour to absorb residual moisture, making the meatballs much easier to roll.
- 2. Build the broth base by sautéing the diced onion and blooming the turmeric.**

While the meat chills, place a large, wide pot over medium heat and warm the neutral oil. Add the diced large onion and sauté for 7 to 8 minutes until translucent and golden. Stir in 1 teaspoon of turmeric and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant.
- 3. Fry the tomato paste and bloom the remaining dried mint.**

Add the tomato paste to the pot, stirring constantly for 2 to 3 minutes. This critical step cooks off the raw, metallic taste of canned tomatoes and turns the paste a deep, vibrant red. Stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon of dried mint, letting it toast in the hot oil for just 10 seconds.
- 4. Add the boiling water and potatoes to create the broth.**

Carefully pour in the 4 cups of boiling water, scraping the bottom of the pot to dissolve the tomato paste into a smooth broth. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper, drop in the cubed potatoes, and bring the liquid to a vigorous, rolling boil.
- 5. Roll the chilled meat into small balls and drop them directly into the aggressively boiling liquid.**

Pinch off small pieces of the meat mixture and roll them between your palms to form balls about the size of a large walnut. Drop them one by one into the boiling broth. Do not stir them immediately, and critically, do not cover the pot. Let them boil uncovered for 5 to 8 minutes. The rapid heat sears the exterior, locking their shape in place.
- 6. Simmer the stew gently until the sauce reduces and the potatoes are tender.**

Once the meatballs have set and changed color on the outside, gently give the pot a stir. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover the pot with a lid left slightly ajar, and simmer for 40 to 45 minutes until the sauce thickens and the potatoes are easily pierced with a fork.

1. Finish the dish with fresh lemon juice and serve warm.

Turn off the heat and stir in the fresh lemon juice to brighten the rich sauce. Taste and adjust the salt if necessary. Serve directly from the pot alongside warm flatbread or basmati rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The meat must be incredibly lean.**

Do not use a standard 80/20 ground beef blend. The fat will quickly render and melt in the boiling liquid, leaving void spaces that cause the meatballs to collapse into a loose meat sauce. Seek out 90% or 93% lean beef.

● **Squeeze the grated onion dry.**

Chickpea flour acts differently than Western breadcrumbs. If the raw, acidic onion juice is mixed into the meat, the hydration levels will be too high and the meatballs will turn to mush. You only want the sweet, fibrous pulp.

● **The rescue mission for loose meatballs.**

If you are unsure about the structural integrity of your mixture, perform a test boil. Drop exactly one meatball into the boiling sauce. If it holds its shape after 3 minutes, proceed. If it begins to disintegrate, pull your raw meat mixture out, add an extra tablespoon of chickpea flour, and knead it for another 2 minutes.



Khoresh Kadoo ba Morgh

خورش کدو با مرغ

kho-resk ka-doo ba morgh

If there is one aroma that immediately teleports a diaspora kid right back to an Ohio suburb on a Tuesday evening, it's the smell of this stew simmering on the stove. While grand, labor-intensive weekend dishes get all the glory, this humble, vibrant zucchini and chicken stew is the unsung hero of the Persian mother's weeknight arsenal. The magic relies on one absolute non-negotiable trick: you must pan-fry the zucchini separately before it hits the broth. It creates a structural seal, stopping the squash from disintegrating into mush, and lets it soak up a rich, saffron-laced tomato base soured perfectly with unripe grapes. It's elegant, deeply comforting, and requires zero pretense.

INGREDIENTS

4 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	1 tsp	ground turmeric
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs	1 tsp	kosher salt
4 med	zucchini <i>ends trimmed and cut in half lengthwise</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
2 med	tomatoes <i>halved</i>	1/8 tsp	ground cinnamon
		1/4 cup	ghooreh
		1/4 tsp	ground saffron

PREPARATION

- **Bloom the saffron.**

Saffron should never be tossed dry into a boiling pot. Grind the threads into a fine powder with a pinch of sugar, then steep it in two tablespoons of hot water to release its aroma before cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the flavor base.**

Add two tablespoons of the oil to a large Dutch oven over medium heat, tossing in the diced onions to cook until deep golden brown around the edges.

- 2. Sear the chicken and bloom the spices.**

Push the onions to the sides, drop in the chicken thighs, and sear for three to four minutes per side. Sprinkle the turmeric, black pepper, and salt over the meat, stirring for sixty seconds so the spices toast in the hot oil.

- 3. Fry the tomato paste.**

Make a clearing in the center of the pot and add the tomato paste directly to the hot surface. Fry it for two minutes until it darkens to a deep brick red, neutralizing the tinny canned flavor, then toss everything together to coat the chicken.

1. Braise the chicken.

Pour in just enough boiling water to come halfway up the sides of the chicken, about one and a half cups. Add the cinnamon, bring to a gentle boil, cover, and let it simmer on low for thirty minutes.

2. Deploy the grandmother trick.

While the chicken simmers, heat the remaining two tablespoons of oil in a wide skillet over medium-high heat and lay the zucchini flat-side down. Fry undisturbed for five minutes to build a golden crust, flip for three more minutes, then remove, quickly blistering the halved tomatoes in the same pan.

3. Marry the ingredients.

Gently lay the fried zucchini and blistered tomatoes on top of the tender chicken, then scatter the ghooreh over the top.

4. Finish with liquid gold.

Drizzle the bloomed saffron water evenly over the stew, cover, and simmer on low for a final ten to fifteen minutes until the sauce is perfectly thickened.

5. Serve.

Taste the broth to ensure it is savory and distinctly tangy, adjusting the salt if necessary, and serve directly from the pot alongside steaming basmati rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the right squash.**

Look for light green Mexican squash (calabacita) or grey squash if you can find it, as it mimics native Iranian kadoo closer than standard dark green zucchini.

● **Souring agent substitutes.**

If you cannot find frozen or jarred ghooreh (unripe sour grapes) at a Middle Eastern market, two tablespoons of abghooreh (verjuice) or fresh lemon juice added at the end works beautifully.



Khoresh-e Karafs ba Morgh

خورش کرفس با مرغ

kho-resh-e ka-rafs ba morg

Forget the two-hour braises. This is the everyday stovetop magic of a Persian kitchen, adapted for the realities of an American weeknight. The secret here isn't a slow-simmering cut of lamb, but the meticulous, separate frying of celery and herbs to lock in their structure and extract their deep, lipid-soluble flavors. It is a masterclass in building a profound, herbaceous broth from nothing more than chicken thighs, caramelized onions, turmeric, and water. No boxed stock necessary. Just honest ingredients, treated with the respect a grandmother would demand.

INGREDIENTS

3 small	Limu Omani	1 tsp	ground turmeric
3 tbsp	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	1 1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces</i>
1 bunch	celery <i>stalks cut into 1-inch pieces, leafy tops finely chopped</i>	1 tbsp	tomato paste
2 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>stems removed and finely chopped</i>	3 cup	water
1/2 cup	fresh mint <i>finely chopped</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
		2 tbsp	fresh lemon juice

PREPARATION

- **Wash and dry the herbs thoroughly.**

Ensure the parsley and mint are completely dry before chopping to prevent them from steaming instead of frying in the oil.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Tame the dried limes.**

Puncture 3 to 4 holes in each lime using a fork, then submerge them in cold water. This leaches the harsh tannins while preserving their beautiful, fermented sourness.

- 2. Fry the celery and herbs.**

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium heat and sauté the celery stalks for 8 to 10 minutes until softened and vibrant. Add the celery leaves, parsley, and mint. Drop the heat to medium-low and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly until the herbs darken and release their oils. Watch carefully; mint burns easily and will turn the whole pot bitter if scorched. Set aside.

1. Build the aromatic base.

In a large Dutch oven, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté patiently for 8 to 10 minutes until deeply golden. Do not rush this; these caramelized onions form the foundation of your broth. Stir in the turmeric and black pepper, toasting for 30 seconds.

2. Sear the chicken.

Toss the chicken pieces into the pot to coat them in the spiced onions. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes until browned and sealed. Stir in the tomato paste, letting it caramelize on the bottom of the pot for 1 minute to cook off its raw flavor.

3. Braise the stew.

Transfer the sautéed celery and herb mixture into the Dutch oven. Add the salt, pour in the water, and drop in the drained limes. Bring to a rolling boil, immediately drop the heat to its lowest setting, cover, and simmer gently for 40 to 45 minutes.

4. Adjust the seasoning and serve.

Uncover the pot. The chicken should be incredibly tender, the celery holding its shape, and a layer of seasoned oil should have risen to the top. Stir in the lemon juice for a confident acidic punch. Taste, adjust the salt, and serve piping hot alongside steaming saffron basmati rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Don't fear the herb volume.**

In Persian cooking, herbs aren't a garnish; they are the main vegetable. If you cannot find fresh mint, 2 tablespoons of high-quality dried mint can be substituted.

● **Reject the boxed stock.**

Western instinct screams for chicken broth here. Resist. The natural collagen from the chicken thighs, the maillard reaction from the onions, and the turmeric create an unadulterated Persian flavor profile that commercial stock would only muddy.

- **Missing dried limes?**

If you can't source Limu Omani, substitute with an additional 3 tablespoons of freshly squeezed lemon juice stirred in at the very end to achieve the signature tang.



Ghormeh Sabzi

قورمه سبزی

ghor-meh sab-zee

Ghormeh Sabzi is the undisputed king of Persian stews, a deeply earthy, unapologetically sour masterpiece that usually demands an entire Sunday. The secret to that dark, grandmother-approved depth isn't hours of stirring—it's the aggressive frying of the herbs and the funky, fermented punch of dried black limes. We are skipping the grueling herb-chopping marathon by relying on high-quality dried mixes and letting a pressure cooker do the heavy lifting, delivering that coveted, oil-separated perfection on a Tuesday night without compromising a damn thing.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	boneless beef chuck roast <i>cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
3 oz	dried Sabzi Ghormeh herb mix	4 small	dried Persian black limes <i>pierced multiple times with a fork</i>
2 tbsp	neutral oil	3 cup	water
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	15 oz	canned red kidney beans <i>rinsed and drained</i>
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1 tbsp	unsalted butter
1 tsp	black pepper	1 med	ice cube

PREPARATION

- **Rehydrate the dried herbs.**

Soak the dried herb mix in warm water for 15 to 20 minutes, then drain the excess water thoroughly before cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Brown the meat and aromatics aggressively.**

Activate the sauté function on your pressure cooker, heat the oil, and cook the onion until translucent before tossing in the beef, turmeric, salt, and black pepper to sear until deeply browned.

- 2. Fry the rehydrated herbs.**

Push the beef and onions to the edges of the pot, melt the butter in the center, and sauté the drained herbs for 5 to 7 minutes until they are profoundly fragrant and dark forest green.

- 3. Pressure cook the stew.**

Submerge the pierced black limes into the mixture, pour in the water, seal the lid, and pressure cook on high for 40 minutes.

1. Stir in the beans and let the stew settle.

Perform a quick release of the pressure, stir in the kidney beans, and switch the cooker back to sauté mode on low heat for 15 minutes so the broth thickens and the flavors meld.

2. Shock the stew to separate the oil.

Drop a single ice cube into the simmering pot right before serving to rapidly drop the temperature and force the deep green, herb-infused oil to the surface.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Black Lime Warning.**

If you are highly sensitive to bitterness, skip piercing the limes; instead, crack them open, discard the seeds and stems entirely, and toss only the dried flesh into the pot.

● **Serving the Stew.**

Serve immediately over a bed of steamed, long-grain basmati rice featuring a crispy bottom crust (Tahdig).



Khoresh Aloo Esfenaj

خورش آلو اسفناج

kho-resh ah-loo es-fe-nahj

Real Persian food demands respect, but that doesn't mean you need to suffer over a stove on a Tuesday night. Khoresh Aloo Esfenaj is a masterful tightrope walk of earthy spinach, savory meat, and the sweet-tart punch of golden plums. Your grandmother would simmer lamb for hours until it surrendered to the pot. We're using chicken thighs—they bring the required richness but get you to the table in under an hour. The real secret here isn't the meat, anyway; it's the spinach. You don't just dump it in. You dry-wilt it, then fry it in oil. It's

the only way to get that deep, concentrated flavor and the beautiful layer of shimmering oil on top that tells you the stew has finally fallen into place.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
2 lb	mature bunch spinach <i>washed, thick stems removed, and roughly chopped</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/4 cup	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>
15	pitted black prunes	3 tbsp	fresh lemon juice
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1/4 tsp	ground saffron <i>bloomed in 2 tbsp hot water</i>
		1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon

PREPARATION

- **Bloom the saffron.**

To properly bloom saffron, grind the threads into a fine powder with a tiny pinch of sugar or coarse salt, then let it steep in 2 tablespoons of hot water for at least 10 minutes before adding it to the pot.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Rehydrate the plums.**

Place the prunes in a small bowl and cover them with warm water so they plump up and become tender without dissolving into mush later.

1. Sear the aromatic foundation and the chicken.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Sauté the diced onion for 8 to 10 minutes until soft and golden brown, then add the chicken pieces, turmeric, and black pepper, cooking another 5 to 7 minutes until the meat is browned and fragrant.

2. Simmer the stew.

Pour in just enough boiling water to barely cover the chicken—about 1 1/2 to 2 cups. Scrape up any browned bits from the bottom, bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and let it simmer for 30 minutes.

3. Dry-wilt and fry the spinach.

While the chicken simmers, place a large, wide skillet over medium-high heat with no oil. Add the chopped spinach, stirring frequently until it collapses and all the liquid evaporates completely. Once the pan is bone-dry, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil and fry for 5 to 7 minutes until the spinach turns a deep, dark green, being careful not to let it burn.

4. Marry the greens and the fruit.

About 15 minutes before the chicken is done simmering, drain the soaking plums and add them to the pot along with the fried spinach, stirring gently to keep the fruit intact.

5. Achieve the perfect ja-oftadan.

In the final 10 minutes of cooking, gently stir in the lemon juice, salt, bloomed saffron water, and cinnamon. Taste the broth for that perfect sweet-and-sour balance, leaving the lid slightly ajar on the lowest possible heat until the oils naturally separate and float to the glossy surface.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Manage the sweet and sour balance.**

Authentic Aloo Bokhara (golden sour prunes) provide a natural tartness. If you use sweeter standard black prunes from the American supermarket, use the full 3 tablespoons of lemon juice to balance the flavor profile into the proper 'males' tightrope.

- **Weekend protein substitution.**

If you have the time on a weekend, swap the chicken for lamb shoulder or beef chuck, but plan to increase the simmering time to about 2 hours.



Khoresh Fesenjan

خورش فسنگان

kho-resh fe-sen-joon

There is a profound alchemy in Persian cooking, a sacred balance of hot and cold, rich and tart. For generations, achieving the deeply dark, oil-slicked perfection of Fesenjan meant surrendering your Sunday to a simmering pot. But grandmothers have secrets, and the best ones are born of necessity. By grating the onion, dry-toasting the walnut meal to jumpstart the Maillard reaction, and dropping actual ice cubes into the boiling stew to shock the oils to the surface, this sweet-and-sour masterpiece is yours on a Tuesday. It's the exact, luxurious taste of home, reclaimed for the weeknight hustle.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	raw walnut halves	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 large	yellow onion <i>peeled</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
2 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	3/4 cup	pomegranate molasses
1/2 tsp	ground turmeric	3 tbsp	granulated sugar
1 1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into 1-inch bite-sized pieces</i>	4 large	ice cubes

PREPARATION

- **Process the walnuts to a coarse meal.**

Pulse the walnuts in a food processor until they resemble fine sand, taking care not to over-process them into a paste or butter.

- **Grate the onion into a pulp.**

Pass the onion through the fine holes of a box grater so it melts completely into the stew without leaving any lumps.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté the aromatics and toast the walnut meal.**

Place a heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the oil and grated onion pulp, and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the turmeric, immediately add the ground walnuts, and toast for 5 to 7 minutes while stirring constantly until the mixture darkens and smells deeply nutty.

- 2. Build the liquid base of the stew.**

Pour 2 cups of cold water into the toasted walnuts, stirring vigorously to prevent lumps, then add the pomegranate molasses and sugar. Bring to a gentle boil, reduce the heat to the lowest possible simmer, and cover.

1. Sear the chicken to hold its texture.

Season the bite-sized chicken pieces with salt and pepper. In a separate skillet over medium-high heat, sear the meat just until the exteriors are browned, about 5 minutes, then transfer it directly into the simmering walnut sauce.

2. Execute the ice shock to release the oils.

Let the stew simmer covered for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drop two ice cubes directly into the pot and stir gently; the sudden thermal shock forces the walnuts to rapidly expel their natural oils into a glossy, reddish-brown layer on the surface. If it still looks dry after 10 minutes, add the remaining two ice cubes.

3. Balance the sweet and sour profile.

Taste the stew for the essential *malas* (sweet-and-sour) balance—a tightrope walk between tart and sweet. Add another spoonful of sugar if needed, and serve immediately over steamed Persian basmati rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The ugly phase is temporary.**

For the first twenty minutes, the stew will look like muddy dishwater. Let it ride; it will magically transform into a rich mahogany as the walnuts hydrate and the molasses reduces.

● **Pomegranate molasses varies wildly.**

Some brands are fortified with sugar, others are pure, concentrated tartness. The sugar measurement is just a guide; taste and adjust to reach the perfect sweet-and-sour equilibrium.

● **Watch the bottom of the pot.**

Walnut meal loves to sink and scorch. Give the pot a good stir every 10 to 15 minutes, scraping the bottom with a wooden spoon.



Khoresh Bademjan

خورش بادمجان

kho-resch bah-dem-jahn

If eggplant is the potato of Iran, Khoresh Bademjan is its highest calling. In the old country, cooks stand over spitting pans of oil for hours, frying eggplants into buttery submission. We don't have that kind of time on a Tuesday. We bypass the mess by roasting Japanese eggplants and swapping traditional lamb for quick-braising chicken thighs. The grandmother-approved secret that makes it sing is the chashni—a handful of unripe sour grapes that slice right through the rich, savory fat, pulling you straight back to a kitchen in Tehran.

INGREDIENTS

6 small	Japanese or Chinese eggplants <i>peeled and sliced in half lengthwise</i>	1/2 tsp	ground black pepper
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
6 tbsp	neutral cooking oil <i>divided</i>	3 tbsp	double concentrated tomato paste
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 med	ripe tomatoes <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 1/2 lb	bone in skinless chicken thighs	2 cup	hot water or low sodium chicken broth
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1/3 cup	frozen sour grapes
		1/4 tsp	ground saffron

PREPARATION

- **Bloom the saffron.**

Combine the ground saffron with 2 tablespoons of hot water in a small glass and let it sit to release its aroma and color while you cook the stew.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Extract the bitterness from the eggplants with a heavy dose of kosher salt.**
Preheat the oven to 400°F. Toss the sliced eggplants in a colander with the salt and let them sit for 20 minutes to draw out the bitter alkaloids and collapse their spongy texture.
- 2. Rinse the eggplants and roast them into buttery submission.**
Rinse the eggplants under cold water, pat them aggressively dry with paper towels, and toss them on a parchment-lined baking sheet with 3 tablespoons of the oil. Roast for 25 to 30 minutes until blistered and soft.

1. Build the flavor foundation with golden onions and seared chicken.

Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Sauté the diced onion for 8 to 10 minutes until translucent, then push them aside, drop in the chicken, and dust heavily with the turmeric, black pepper, and cinnamon. Sear for 4 to 5 minutes per side.

2. Fry the tomato paste to kill the raw flavor.

Make a well in the center of the pot, drop in the tomato paste, and let it fry in the hot oil for a minute or two until it turns a deep brick red. Dump in the chopped tomatoes, pour in the hot water, and scrape up the browned bits from the bottom.

3. Simmer the stew to break down the chicken.

Bring the pot to a boil, drop the heat to a gentle simmer, cover, and let it cook undisturbed for 30 minutes.

4. Introduce the tart chashni and nestle in the roasted eggplants.

Stir in the sour grapes to establish that crucial, bright tartness. Carefully lay the roasted eggplants across the top of the liquid—do not stir vigorously from this point forward, or they will disintegrate. Cover and simmer on low for another 15 to 20 minutes.

5. Finish with bloomed saffron and let the oils rise.

Kill the heat, drizzle the bloomed saffron water over the top, and let the pot sit for 5 minutes. The stew should look thick, with small pools of spiced orange oil surfacing—the hallmark of a properly matured khoresh.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Globe eggplants are an absolute last resort.**

If you can only find massive Italian eggplants, salt them heavily for 45 minutes, press them with a heavy weight to squeeze out the water, and cut them into thick batons before roasting. Japanese or Chinese eggplants are vastly superior here.

- **Fresh lime juice can substitute for sour grapes in a pinch.**

If you cannot find frozen ghooreh at a Middle Eastern market, wait until the stew is completely finished and off the heat, then gently stir in 3 tablespoons of fresh lime juice to prevent bitterness.



Khoresh Bamieh

خورش بامیه

kho-resb ba-mee-yeh

Okra divides people, almost exclusively because of the slime. But in the hands of an Iranian grandmother, that mucilage is subdued through a rigid, unwritten science: never pierce the hollow pod, blister the exterior in hot oil, and drown it in unapologetic acid. While the standard Tehrani version leans on lemon and tomato, the true heavy-hitter of the diaspora hails from the southern province of Khuzestan. Down by the Persian Gulf, they build a deeply savory, pungent foundation of heavy garlic, aggressively seared beef, and the fruity, lip-

smacking punch of tamarind concentrate. It is a weeknight-friendly masterclass in authentic stovetop alchemy that delivers exactly what home tastes like.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	vegetable oil <i>divided</i>	1/4 tsp	cayenne pepper
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely chopped</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 lb	beef chuck roast <i>trimmed and cut into 3/4-inch cubes</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
5 clove	garlic <i>minced</i>	2 1/2 cup	beef broth <i>low-sodium</i>
1 tsp	ground turmeric	3 tbsp	tamarind concentrate
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1 lb	frozen baby okra <i>unthawed</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat two tablespoons of oil in a heavy Dutch oven over medium-high heat and sauté the onion until golden.**

This builds the foundational aromatics and takes about 5 to 7 minutes.

- 2. Stir in the garlic, turmeric, black pepper, and cayenne to bloom the spices, then add the beef cubes and sear aggressively.**

Small pieces of beef provide maximum surface area for browning and cut the traditional braising time down to a weeknight-friendly hour.

- 3. Clear a spot in the center of the pot, drop in the tomato paste, and fry it in the oil for two minutes until it darkens to a deep brick red.**

Cooking the tomato paste directly on the hot surface kills the raw, metallic tin flavor and releases its fat-soluble pigments. Stir to coat the meat once darkened.

- 1. Pour in the beef broth and salt, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom, then cover and simmer on low for 45 to 60 minutes.**

The beef should be perfectly tender by the time the hour is up.

- 2. While the meat simmers, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a separate skillet and gently sauté the frozen okra for 5 to 7 minutes.**

This brief searing step is the ultimate defense against slimy okra, sealing the exterior of the pod before it ever touches the stew liquid.

- 3. Whisk the tamarind concentrate with a splash of warm water to loosen it, pour it into the stew, and gently slide in the seared okra.**

The intense acidity of the tamarind neutralizes any remaining okra mucilage while providing the signature Khuzestani sour punch.

- 4. Simmer the stew uncovered for a final 20 to 30 minutes, shaking the pot by its handles rather than stirring.**

Vigorous stirring will break the softened okra pods; shaking preserves their structure. The stew is ready when it reduces into a thick, glossy sauce with a slight sheen of oil pooling at the surface.

CHEF'S NOTES

- If you substitute fresh okra, never pierce the hollow center of the pod.**

Meticulously slice away only the rough stem cap in a shallow cone shape.

Breaching the hollow body releases the mucilage and instantly compromises the stew's texture.



The Modern Mehmooni (Weekend Feasts and Ta'arof)

Built for modern weekend hosting, capturing the extreme hospitality and abundance of the classic Persian dinner party.

There is a beautiful, necessary madness to the Persian dinner party. It's called mehmooni, and it is a blood sport of hospitality. You do not just feed your guests; you overwhelm them. You engage in the elaborate, exhausting social dance of ta'arof, offering and refusing until the dining table groans under the weight of eggplant dip swimming in hot mint oil and massive platters of steaming green bean rice. For the first-generation host in America, the logistics

may have shifted to fit a two-day weekend, but the mandate remains identical: nobody leaves hungry, and absolutely nobody leaves without a heavy container of leftovers.

This is the weekend feast, stripped of the week-long grandmotherly prep but retaining every ounce of its soul. Here are your weapons: a violently bright Shirazi salad to cut through the rich fats, delicate chicken and chickpea gondi bobbing in hot broth, and enough Kashk-e Bademjan to stop a conversation dead. It is love, weaponized through starch, saffron, and an unapologetic abundance.





Zeytoon Parvardeh

زیتون پرورده

zey-toon par-var-deh

Forget the bastardized, pan-Mediterranean blog versions laced with Greek oregano and red wine vinegar. Authentic Zeytoon Parvardeh hails from Gilan—the lush, rain-swept Caspian coast of Northern Iran—and relies on an exact alchemy of sweet walnuts, tart pomegranate molasses, and earthy local herbs. To replicate those wild-foraged Iranian herbs in an American kitchen, we use a specific blend of mint and cilantro spiked with musky golpar. But the real grandmother secret here is the technique: dry-toasting the walnuts before grinding them. It kills the bitter tannins and releases their natural oils, giving you a creamy, cohesive marinade that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	pitted green olives <i>drained</i>	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro leaves <i>packed</i>
1 1/2 cup	raw walnuts	1 tsp	dried mint
4 tbsp	pomegranate molasses	1 tsp	golpar
2 tbsp	unsweetened pomegranate juice	2 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
3 clove	garlic <i>peeled</i>	1/4 cup	fresh pomegranate arils
1/4 cup	fresh mint leaves <i>packed</i>	to taste	salt
		to taste	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Soak the olives to strip out the excess brine.

American jarred olives are aggressively salty and will ruin the balance of the dish. Submerge them in a bowl of cold water for 15 to 20 minutes, then drain and pat them completely dry with a clean towel.

2. Dry-toast the walnuts to release their oils.

Do not skip this. Place a dry skillet over medium-low heat, add the raw walnuts, and toast for 4 to 6 minutes, tossing frequently until fragrant. This kills the bitter tannins in the skin and guarantees a creamy, cohesive paste. Let them cool to room temperature.

3. Pulverize the walnuts, garlic, and herbs.

In a food processor, pulse the cooled walnuts and garlic cloves until the mixture looks like coarse sand. Add the fresh mint, fresh cilantro, dried mint, and golpar, pulsing again until the herbs are finely minced and integrated.

4. Emulsify the paste with pomegranate and oil.

Pour in the pomegranate molasses, pomegranate juice, and olive oil. Run the machine for a few seconds until a thick, dark-brown, cohesive paste forms.

1. Toss the olives in the marinade.

Transfer the paste to a large mixing bowl and fold in the dried green olives, stirring until every single olive is heavily coated. Do not blindly add salt—taste an olive first, then add salt or a crack of black pepper only if it needs it.

2. Let it marinate in the fridge before serving.

Stir in half of the pomegranate seeds, pack the mixture into a glass container, and chill for at least 4 hours—overnight is even better. Garnish with the remaining pomegranate seeds and serve at room temperature alongside flatbread.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing Golpar.**

Also known as Persian hogweed or angelica seeds, this musky, aromatic spice is non-negotiable for true authenticity. You will need to hit up a Middle Eastern market, but it is the trigger for that grandmother's kitchen nostalgia.

● **Dialing in the molasses.**

Commercial pomegranate molasses varies wildly. If your store-bought bottle is overwhelmingly sweet, balance it with a splash of fresh lemon juice or sour orange juice to restore the tart, acidic backbone of Gilani cuisine.



Quick Kuku Sabzi

کوکو سبزی

koo-koo sab-zee

Growing up in a Midwestern suburb, the intoxicating aroma of frying herbs meant Nowruz was near, or a weekend mehmoonī was in full swing. Back home, grandmothers spent hours meticulously hand-chopping greens to achieve the canonical Kuku Sabzi—a dense, intensely fragrant herb pie barely bound by eggs. For the modern weeknight, a food processor does the heavy lifting, provided the herbs are bone-dry. The real secret isn't in the chopping, anyway. It's in taft dadan—briefly sautéing the greens to kill the moisture and deepen the

flavor—and a spoonful of yogurt for an impossibly tender crumb. Ditch the terrifying stovetop flip for a stress-free oven broil, and it tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 large bunch	flat-leaf parsley <i>roughly chopped</i>	1 tbsp	all-purpose flour
1 large bunch	cilantro <i>roughly chopped</i>	1 tsp	baking powder
1 large bunch	fresh dill <i>roughly chopped</i>	1 tsp	dried fenugreek leaves
1 bunch	scallions <i>green and light white parts only, finely hand-sliced</i>	1/2 tsp	ground turmeric
1 cup	mature spinach leaves <i>packed</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
5 large	large eggs	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 tbsp	full-fat Greek yogurt	1/3 cup	raw walnuts <i>roughly chopped</i>
		2 tbsp	dried cranberries <i>tossed with 1/2 tsp lemon juice</i>
		4 tbsp	neutral oil <i>divided</i>

PREPARATION

- **Eliminate all moisture from the herbs.**

Wash the parsley, cilantro, dill, and spinach well in advance and aggressively spin them dry. Residual water will steam the dish from the inside out, resulting in a weeping, mushy mess.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mince the dry herbs in batches.**

Pulse the parsley, cilantro, dill, and spinach in a food processor until finely minced, avoiding a wet paste, then combine with the hand-sliced scallions. Scallions will turn to slime in a machine, so keep them out of the processor.

1. Sauté the greens to build depth.

Heat one tablespoon of the oil in an oven-safe skillet over medium heat and sauté the herbs for exactly three to five minutes to drive off moisture and initiate browning. Spread the mixture on a wide plate to cool completely so it doesn't scramble the eggs.

2. Mix the binding matrix.

Gently whisk the eggs, yogurt, flour, baking powder, fenugreek, turmeric, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Fold in the cooled herbs, walnuts, and lemon-soaked cranberries until it resembles a thick green sludge with barely any visible egg.

3. Fry the crust.

Wipe out the skillet, add the remaining three tablespoons of oil, and heat over medium until shimmering. Pour in the batter, smooth the top, turn the heat to medium-low, and let it fry undisturbed for eight to ten minutes until the bottom edges are deeply golden.

4. Broil to finish.

Transfer the skillet to a preheated broiler for three to five minutes until the top springs back slightly, entirely bypassing the perilous traditional flip. Let it rest in the pan for ten minutes before slicing into wedges.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Respect the cast iron.**

If using a cast-iron skillet, ensure it is thoroughly preheated before adding the oil, and let the oil shimmer before adding the batter. That initial shock of heat guarantees the non-stick crust characteristic of authentic Persian fried foods.

● **Serve with the spread.**

Kuku Sabzi is rarely eaten entirely on its own. Serve it alongside flatbread like lavash or pita, sharp feta cheese, radishes, and tomatoes, or as the traditional companion to Nowruz fish.



Salad Shirazi

سالاد شیرازی

sālād-e shirāzi

In Iran, a salad isn't a precursor to the meal; it's a structural necessity. Salad Shirazi is a fiercely acidic, crunchy palate cleanser engineered to cut straight through the richness of heavy stews and saffron rice. There is no lettuce, no balsamic, and no room for creative embellishment. The magic lies entirely in the "negini" cut—a meditative, meticulous dicing of vegetables into uniform, quarter-inch jewels—and the patience to let the sharp sting of verjuice and earthy dried mint mingle in the cold before serving. It is simple, unpretentious, and strictly fundamental.

INGREDIENTS

4 med	Persian cucumbers <i>unpeeled</i>	3 tbsp	abghooreh or fresh lime juice
3 med	Roma tomatoes <i>halved</i>	1 tbsp	dried mint
1 small	white onion <i>peeled</i>	1 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
		1/2 tsp	kosher salt
		1/4 tsp	black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Scoop the watery seed pulp out of the halved Roma tomatoes and discard it.** Roma tomatoes have a high flesh-to-water ratio, but removing the seeds is an essential Grandmother's trick to prevent the salad from devolving into a watery soup.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Dice the cucumbers, tomatoes, and onion into uniform quarter-inch cubes.**
This is the "negini" (jewel) cut, and it is non-negotiable. Meticulous dicing ensures multiple pieces of cucumber, tomato, and onion fit onto a single spoon for a perfectly balanced bite.
- 2. Soak the diced onion in a bowl of ice water for ten minutes, then drain thoroughly and pat dry.**
This leaches out the harsh sulfurous compounds that can overpower the delicate salad, while preserving the necessary crunch.
- 3. Combine the diced cucumbers, tomatoes, and onion in a large mixing bowl.**
- 4. Sprinkle the dried mint, salt, and pepper over the vegetables, then pour in the verjuice and olive oil.**
Do not substitute fresh mint or parsley here. The dusty, earthy aroma of dried mint is the quintessential Persian signature of this dish.

1. **Toss everything gently with a large spoon until the mint is evenly distributed.**
2. **Cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least thirty minutes before serving.**

This resting period allows the salt to draw out natural juices from the vegetables, emulsifying with the acid to create a self-saucing dressing. Taste for salt and acid right before serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Seek out abghooreh if you can find it.**

Also known as verjuice, this unripe sour grape juice provides a complex tartness that is less abrasive than white vinegar and more floral than standard lemon. If unavailable, fresh lime juice is the absolute best accessible substitute. Never use bottled lemon juice.

- **Keep it strictly traditional.**

Resist the urge to add bell peppers, fresh herbs, or feta cheese. The austere, focused ingredient list is exactly what makes this recipe work so perfectly against a heavy Persian meal.



Express Loobia Polo Mayeh

لوبيا پلو

loo-bee-yah po-lo ma-yeh

Traditionally, Loobia Polo requires soaking, parboiling, draining, and a minor miracle to get on the table. Not today. This is the weeknight holy grail of the diaspora kitchen, built on the wisdom of the Caspian coast grandmothers who swear by the one-pot absorption method known as *kateh*. By marrying a deeply spiced, rendered beef and green bean base—which you can batch and freeze on a Sunday—with imported basmati, you summon the intoxicating scent of saffron and cinnamon to a random Tuesday night. No shortcuts on flavor, just absolute respect for your time.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	extra-long grain Basmati rice <i>rinsed until the water runs completely clear</i>	1 lb	fresh green beans <i>trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch pieces</i>
1 tbsp	kosher salt	2 tbsp	tomato paste
3 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	1 tsp	turmeric
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 tsp	ground cinnamon
3/4 lb	80/20 ground beef	1/2 tsp	black pepper
		1/2 tsp	edible rose petal powder
		1/4 tsp	liquid bloomed saffron

PREPARATION

- **Batch and freeze the Mayeh.**

The true weeknight secret to this dish is tripling the meat, bean, and tomato base (the Mayeh) on a Sunday. Freeze it in batches. Come Thursday night, you just drop a thawed block into rinsed rice, add water, and turn on the stove.

- **Properly bloom the saffron.**

Never toss dry saffron threads directly into a dish. Grind a pinch in a mortar and pestle with a single crystal of sugar, then steep it in two tablespoons of hot water to fully release its color and aroma.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté the onions until translucent and golden.**

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed non-stick pot over medium heat. Do not let the onions burn; they need to remain soft and sweet.

- 2. Render the beef with the foundational spices.**

Add the ground beef, turmeric, and black pepper. Break the meat apart constantly with a wooden spoon, letting it fry until deeply browned and the animal fats fully render.

- 1. Sweat the green beans to release their internal moisture.**
Add the chopped green beans and cook for exactly five minutes. You aren't blistering them; you're just gently dehydrating them so they act like sponges for the rich sauce.
- 2. Fry the tomato paste to eliminate its raw, metallic bite.**
Push the meat and beans to the edges to create a well. Drop the tomato paste directly into the rendered fat in the center and fry for two minutes until it darkens to a brick-red, then mix it all together.
- 3. Marry the rice and the base with the golden water ratio.**
Fold the rinsed rice directly into the pot. Pour in hot water until it sits exactly two centimeters—about the height of your first finger joint—above the surface of the rice and meat. Add the salt, cinnamon, and rose petal powder.
- 4. Execute the Kateh boil.**
Bring the pot to a vigorous, uncovered boil over medium-high heat. Wait until the water evaporates just below the surface of the rice and you hear the gentle crackle of fat frying at the bottom of the pot.
- 5. Steam undisturbed under a towel-wrapped lid.**
Drizzle the bloomed saffron water evenly over the rice. Wrap the lid in a clean kitchen towel to catch condensation, seal the pot tightly, and drop the heat to the absolute lowest setting. Steam for 45 minutes without lifting the lid.
- 6. Fluff and serve.**
Remove from the heat, take off the lid, and gently fluff the rice with a large spatula without mashing the grains. Serve immediately alongside plain yogurt and pickled vegetables.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Respect the finger-joint rule.**
The biggest failure point of the Kateh method is soggy rice (shafteh). Because the meat and vegetables retain moisture, you need strictly less water than a standard Western rice ratio. Trust the two-centimeter measurement.

- **The cinnamon stick swap.**

If you find your finished rice looks muddy instead of a vibrant red-gold, swap the ground cinnamon for a whole stick during the boiling phase to keep the starchy water clear, and remove it before serving.



Gondi

گوندی

goon-dee

If there is one dish that captures the soul of the Iranian-Jewish diaspora, it's Gondi. These giant, golden dumplings were born out of Shabbat necessity—designed to simmer unattended for hours—but they endure because they are undeniably brilliant. The secret that makes you bite in and realize this is exactly what it tastes like in Tehran comes down to two things: roasted chickpea flour and a heavy hand with the cardamom. We're using a food processor to pulverize the onions and bring the dough together in minutes. Let it rest in the fridge while you're at work, drop them in a fragrant broth, and you've got an absolute masterpiece on a Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

1 large	yellow onion <i>peeled and quartered</i>	2 tsp	ground turmeric <i>divided</i>
1 lb	ground dark meat chicken or turkey	4 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
1 1/2 cup	roasted chickpea flour	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
3 tbsp	neutral oil	8 cup	chicken broth
1/4 cup	water	15 oz	chickpeas <i>rinsed and drained</i>
1 tbsp	ground cardamom	2 small	dried Persian limes <i>pierced with a fork</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin		

PREPARATION

- **Toast your own chickpea flour.**

If you cannot find pre-roasted chickpea flour (Ard-e Nokhodchi) at a Middle Eastern market, buy standard garbanzo bean flour. Pour it into a dry skillet over medium heat and toast it, stirring constantly, for 5 to 7 minutes until it smells distinctly nutty and turns a shade darker. Let it cool completely before mixing your dough.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Pulverize the onion.**

Place the quartered onion into the bowl of a food processor fitted with the blade attachment and pulse until it is completely pulverized into a wet, fine pulp. Do not drain the juices; this liquid is crucial for hydrating the chickpea flour.

- 2. Build the dough.**

Add the ground poultry, roasted chickpea flour, oil, water, cardamom, cumin, 1 teaspoon of the turmeric, 1 tablespoon (3 teaspoons) of the salt, and the black pepper to the processor. Pulse 10 to 15 times until the mixture forms a thick, uniform paste with a texture similar to soft modeling clay.

1. Rest and hydrate.

Transfer the mixture to a bowl, cover it tightly, and place it in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour, or up to 24 hours. Chickpea flour is thirsty and needs time to absorb the onion juices and spices so the dumplings don't disintegrate in the pot.

2. Prepare the golden broth.

In a large, wide Dutch oven or stockpot, bring the chicken broth to a rolling boil. Add the chickpeas, the remaining 1 teaspoon of turmeric, and the pierced dried limes. Season with the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt, adjusting to taste depending on the saltiness of your broth.

3. Shape the dumplings.

Remove the chilled dough from the fridge. With wet hands, scoop out tennis-ball-sized portions and roll them gently into smooth spheres; you should yield about 10 to 12 dumplings.

4. Drop and simmer.

Gently drop the Gondi into the boiling broth one by one. Once all the dumplings are in, reduce the heat to medium-low to maintain a gentle simmer, and cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid.

5. Wait it out.

Let the Gondi simmer undisturbed for 45 to 60 minutes. When they are ready, they will have puffed up slightly and will float at the top of the broth.

6. Serve hot.

Ladle the fragrant golden broth and chickpeas over the dumplings in deep bowls. Serve alongside warm flatbread and a platter of fresh herbs like mint, basil, and radishes.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Don't skimp on the fat.**

Using 100% lean ground chicken breast will result in a dry, chalky dumpling. You need dark meat, like ground thighs or dark turkey, to keep the Gondi succulent during the long simmer.



Borani Esfenaj

بورانی اسفناج

boo-rah-nee es-feh-naj

Dating back to the Safavid Empire, this isn't some sad, watery supermarket spinach dip. It's an ancient culinary alchemy of just three foundational elements: high-fat strained yogurt, garlic, and fresh spinach. In diaspora households from Ohio to California, it brings the unmistakable scent of the homeland to the weekend spread. The secret a Persian grandmother would teach you isn't a rare spice, it's uncompromising technique. You must cook the water entirely out of the spinach, mash it fiercely by hand rather than tossing it into a food processor, and never, ever rush the chilling process.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	baby spinach	1/2 cup	walnuts <i>coarsely chopped</i>
2 cup	full-fat plain Greek yogurt	1 tsp	kosher salt
3 large	cloves garlic <i>grated to a fine paste</i>	1/2 tsp	freshly cracked black pepper
1 med	yellow onion <i>halved and very thinly sliced</i>	1 pinch	dried mint <i>for garnish</i>
3 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil		

PREPARATION

- **Plan for the chilling phase.**

Borani Esfenaj is not meant to be eaten immediately upon mixing. The 2-hour minimum stint in the refrigerator is non-negotiable for homogenizing the sharp garlic and tangy yogurt into a unified flavor.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Create the foundational Piaz Dagh.**

Heat the olive oil in a wide skillet or pot over medium heat. Add the sliced onion and fry patiently for 12 to 15 minutes until deeply golden brown, sweet, and slightly crispy at the edges. Remove half of the onions from the pan and set them aside for garnishing later.

- 2. Sauté the garlic and wilt the spinach without adding water.**

To the remaining onions in the pan, add the grated garlic and sauté for 30 seconds until fragrant, taking care not to brown it. Begin adding the fresh spinach in handfuls. Do not add water; the spinach will release its own juices immediately as you gently toss it.

1. Evaporate all residual liquid and aggressively hand-mash the greens.

Once the spinach has wilted, keep the pan uncovered over medium heat until absolutely all the liquid pooling at the bottom has completely evaporated. Turn off the heat and use a potato masher to crush the spinach right in the pan for a minute or two, breaking down the stringy fibers.

2. Stir in the walnuts and let the mixture cool completely to room temperature.

Fold the chopped walnuts into the hot, mashed spinach, then step away. If you mix warm spinach into cold yogurt, the dairy will curdle and split, ruining the texture of the final dish.

3. Fold in the yogurt and enforce a strict resting period.

Transfer the cooled spinach mixture to a bowl and fold in the thick Greek yogurt, kosher salt, and black pepper until beautifully unified. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours to allow the raw garlic bite to mellow and the flavors to bloom.

4. Garnish with the reserved onions and serve.

Spread the chilled Borani Esfenaj into a shallow bowl, creating a few swirls with the back of a spoon. Top with the reserved golden Piaz Dagh, a sprinkle of dried mint, and serve alongside warm flatbread like pita or lavash.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Respect the zero-water rule.**

Boiling spinach waterlogs the leaves and dilutes their flavor. The traditional technique relies entirely on the water naturally present in the greens to wilt them down. Any residual liquid left in the pan will seep out later, causing the yogurt to weep.

● **Ditch the food processor.**

Traditional cooks use a flat-bottomed meat masher called a goosht-koob. A standard American potato masher breaks down the cellular structure just enough to integrate smoothly with the yogurt while retaining a distinct, rustic bite that a blender would destroy.

- **Yogurt fat matters.**

Authentic Persian cooking demands Maast-e Chekideh, a dense, strained yogurt with the whey removed. Full-fat Greek yogurt is the perfect supermarket substitute, but using non-fat or thin plain yogurt will result in a watery mess.



Mahi Sefid Pan-Fried

ماهی سفید سرخ کرده

mahi sefid sorkh kardeh

In Iran, a feast without a spectacular catch from the Caspian is no feast at all. But here in the States, diaspora cooks often mask the delicate flesh of white fish under heavy batters or chemically cook it to mush with hours in a lemon juice marinade. A true northern Iranian grandmother exercises absolute restraint. She neutralizes any oceanic funk with a quick rub of onion juice and saffron, creates a shatteringly crisp crust with nothing but turmeric and rice flour, and crucially, fries the fish flesh-side down first to keep the fillets beautifully flat. Grab thick cuts of local cod or branzino, respect the technique, and you can pull off this Caspian classic on a random Tuesday.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	firm white fish fillets <i>patted completely dry</i>	1 tbsp	olive oil
1/2 med	yellow onion	1/2 cup	white rice flour
3 small clove	fresh garlic <i>peeled and smashed</i>	1 tbsp	ground turmeric
1 tbsp	liquid saffron	1/2 tsp	garlic powder
2 tsp	fine sea salt <i>divided</i>	4 tbsp	neutral cooking oil
1 tsp	black pepper <i>divided</i>	1 tbsp	unsalted butter
		2 med	Seville orange or lemon <i>cut into wedges</i>
		1/4 cup	fresh parsley <i>roughly chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Extract the onion juice.**

Grate the half onion over a small bowl, then scoop up the pulp in your hands and squeeze it tightly to wring out all the juice before discarding the solids.

- **Bloom the saffron.**

If you don't already have liquid saffron on hand, dissolve a quarter teaspoon of ground saffron in a tablespoon of hot water and let it sit for a few minutes.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Marinate the fish with strict restraint.**

Whisk the extracted onion juice, smashed garlic, liquid saffron, one teaspoon of the salt, half a teaspoon of the pepper, and the olive oil together in a shallow dish. Massage this liquid into the fish fillets and let them sit at room temperature for exactly 20 to 30 minutes—do not add acid at this stage, or the delicate proteins will break down into mush.

1. Prepare the golden dredge.

In a wide, shallow plate, whisk together the rice flour, turmeric, garlic powder, and the remaining salt and pepper until the mixture turns a vibrant, sunny yellow.

2. Dry the fillets thoroughly and dust them.

Remove the fish from the marinade and use a paper towel to wipe off all excess moisture and stray bits of garlic. Gently press both sides of the fillets into the turmeric-flour mixture, shaking off any excess to create a very thin, translucent coating.

3. Fry the fish flesh-side down first.

Heat the neutral oil and butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Place the fish into the pan flesh-side down—this prevents the skin from violently shrinking and curling the fillet—and leave it completely undisturbed for 4 to 6 minutes until a deeply caramelized crust forms.

4. Flip and finish cooking.

Once the bottom edges are golden brown and the fish releases easily from the pan, gently flip it onto the skin side and cook for another 3 to 4 minutes until the flesh flakes easily with a fork.

5. Serve immediately with fresh citrus.

Transfer the fish to a warm platter, garnish heavily with the parsley, and serve alongside wedges of sour orange or lemon so your guests can squeeze the bright acid over the hot, crispy crust right before their first bite.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Rice flour is the grandmother's secret to a shatteringly crisp crust.**

While all-purpose flour works in a pinch, naturally gluten-free rice flour absorbs significantly less oil and browns beautifully at high temperatures.

- **Banish lingering frying odors with a garlic clove.**

If you are worried about the smell of frying fish in your kitchen, toss a whole peeled clove of garlic directly into the hot oil alongside the fish to absorb the oceanic funk.



Garm, Sard, & Aash (Grandma's Healing Bowls)

Exploring the ancient Persian calculus of Garmi and Sardi through slow-simmered, restorative bowls.

There is an unspoken calculus in the Iranian kitchen—a balancing act of garmi and sardi that has nothing to do with the thermometer and everything to do with what ails you. When the winter bites or the body breaks down, a Persian grandmother doesn't reach for the medicine cabinet. She goes straight to the stove.

These are the slow-simmered, unapologetic cures of the home fires. Steaming, tangled bowls of aash-e reshteh heavy with kashk, the iron-rich triage of a humble adasi, the deeply restorative, bruising labor of a proper haleem. No restaurant shortcuts, no compromises. Just the pure, unadulterated comfort of being looked after.





Ab Doogh Khidar

آب دوغ خیار

aab-doogh-khi-yaar

The culinary heritage of Iran is built upon a profound understanding of balance. In the blistering heat of the Iranian summer, the body requires cooling foods to survive, and the cure is a restorative, humble bowl of Ab Doogh Khidar. But this isn't just a cold soup of yogurt and cucumbers. It is a masterpiece of ancient Persian humoral medicine. Because the dairy and cucumbers are intensely 'cold' to the body's metabolism, Iranian grandmothers intuitively counterweight them with 'warm' ingredients: toasted walnuts, sweet raisins, and fragrant dried mint. For a first-generation kid recreating those hot summer

afternoons in an Ohio kitchen, the magic relies on a few non-negotiable homeland truths: use the richest dairy you can find, never skip the dried rose petals, and hold the ice until the absolute last second.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	full-fat Greek yogurt	1/4 cup	fresh basil or tarragon <i>finely chopped</i>
2 tbsp	heavy whipping cream	1 tbsp	dried mint
2 cup	Dough or plain unsweetened Kefir	1 small clove	garlic <i>finely grated</i>
1 1/2 cup	ice-cold water	3 med	scallions <i>green parts only, finely sliced</i>
5 small	Persian cucumbers <i>halved lengthwise and finely diced</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 cup	walnuts <i>roughly chopped</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly cracked</i>
1/3 cup	dark or golden raisins <i>rinsed and drained</i>	2 tbsp	dried edible rose petals <i>crushed gently</i>
1/2 cup	fresh mint leaves <i>finely chopped</i>	2 large pieces	lavash or pita bread <i>torn into bite-sized pieces</i>
1/2 cup	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>	12 small	ice cubes

PREPARATION

- **Dehydrate the bread.**

Using fresh, soft bread is the ultimate faux pas as it instantly turns to unappetizing mush in the liquid. Bake the pieces of lavash or pita in a 350°F oven for 5 to 7 minutes until golden and crisp like crackers.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Emulsify the dairy base.

In a large serving bowl, aggressively whisk the full-fat Greek yogurt and heavy cream for thirty seconds until glossy and slightly aerated to prevent the soup from separating.

2. Season the yogurt.

Whisk in the grated garlic, dried mint, crushed dried rose petals, salt, and black pepper.

3. Fold in the solids.

Using a spatula, fold in the diced cucumbers, chopped walnuts, raisins, fresh mint, dill, and basil, holding back the scallions for now.

4. Thin the soup.

Slowly stream in the Doogh, stirring continuously, then gradually add the ice-cold water until the liquid is thinner than tzatziki but thicker than milk.

5. Marinate the flavors.

Cover the bowl and refrigerate for one to two hours so the dried herbs and rose petals can bloom and infuse their essential oils into the dairy.

6. Assemble and serve.

Right before serving, stir in the sliced scallions to prevent them from turning slimy in the liquid. Ladle the cold soup into individual bowls, add two or three ice cubes directly to each serving, and let guests crush the crispy bread over the top.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Toast the walnuts.**

Placing the walnuts in a dry skillet over medium heat for a few minutes releases their essential oils and prevents them from tasting raw in the cold liquid.

- **Substitute grapes for raisins.**

If raisins aren't your preference, substitute a half cup of halved small red grapes to provide the same sweet burst and humoral warmth without the chewy texture.

- **Replicate Doogh if you cannot find it.**

If your local market lacks Doogh or Kefir, increase the Greek yogurt to 3 cups, the cold water to 2 1/2 cups, add an extra teaspoon of dried mint, and squeeze in a tablespoon of fresh lemon juice to mimic the tart fermentation.



Quick Haleem

حليم

ha-leem

Authentic Haleem is a glorious, overnight labor of love involving massive cauldrons of whole wheat and lamb, bashed into a magical, stretchy paste. First-generation kids often assume they can't have that deep, visceral comfort on a Tuesday, settling instead for sad, flavorless hacks using rolled oats. But ask a modern Tehran auntie, and she'll hand you the real weeknight secret: coarse bulgur wheat and an immersion blender. Paired with fast-cooking chicken thighs, it delivers the exact earthy, belly-warming, grandma-approved texture—stretchy, rich, and profoundly soul-satisfying—in under an hour.

INGREDIENTS

3/4 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs	1 cup	coarse bulgur wheat
1 large	yellow onion <i>peeled and quartered</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
1 small	cinnamon stick	4 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>melted</i>
7 cup	water <i>divided</i>	1 tbsp	ground cinnamon <i>for dusting</i>
		1/4 cup	granulated sugar <i>served on the side</i>

PREPARATION

- **Source coarse bulgur wheat.**

Make sure it is coarse bulgur (often in the international aisle), not fine bulgur or rolled oats. This is the key to bypassing an 8-hour cook time while retaining the essential earthy flavor.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Simmer the chicken, onion, and cinnamon stick until the meat falls apart.**

In a medium pot, combine the chicken thighs, quartered onion, cinnamon stick, 1/2 teaspoon of the salt, and 3 cups of water. Bring to a gentle boil, skim any foam, then cover and simmer on low for 40 to 45 minutes until the chicken is incredibly tender.

- 2. Boil the bulgur wheat until it swells and turns entirely to mush.**

While the chicken cooks, place the coarse bulgur in a large, heavy-bottomed pot with 4 cups of water and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Bring to a boil, drop the heat to medium-low, and cook for 35 to 40 minutes. It should look like thick, mushy oatmeal; add a splash of hot water if it dries out too quickly.

- 1. Remove the chicken from the broth and aggressively shred it into microscopic strings.**

Using tongs, pull the chicken out, saving the broth but discarding the onion and cinnamon stick. Use two forks to pull the meat into the finest shreds possible. The authentic stretchy texture depends entirely on these long, unblended meat fibers.

- 2. Puree the mushy bulgur with an immersion blender until completely smooth.**

Take the bulgur off the heat and hit it with an immersion blender right in the pot. It should look like a thick, creamy oat milk. Never blend the meat—only the wheat.

- 3. Fold the shredded chicken into the pureed wheat and beat vigorously.**

Put the pot back on low heat. Add the chicken and 1 cup of the reserved hot broth. Using a wooden spoon or hand masher, beat the mixture against the side of the pot for 10 minutes. The starches and fibers will bind, transforming into a thick, elastic, and properly stretchy (keshdar) porridge.

- 4. Serve hot in shallow bowls, generously garnished with butter, cinnamon, and sugar.**

Ladle the Haleem out and pool melted butter over the top. Pinch ground cinnamon to form intersecting lines, and serve with plenty of granulated sugar on the side for everyone to sweeten to their liking.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The stretch factor is non-negotiable.**

Do not put an immersion blender anywhere near the chicken. Blended meat turns to granular baby food. The authentic stretch (keshdar) comes entirely from shredding the meat by hand and letting the long fibers tangle with the smooth wheat puree.

- **Keep the broth clear.**

Resist the urge to add turmeric or other spices to the base. Authentic Tehrani haleem is a pristine beige, allowing the cinnamon and butter garnish to pop visually.

- **The savory divide.**

If your family hails from Mashhad, you might know a completely different style. Mashhadi Haleem is strictly savory and topped with a split pea stew (Khoresh Gheymeh) instead of sugar. Serve it that way if it tastes more like home.



Quick Ash-e Doogh

آش دوغ

ash-e doogh

In the freezing mountains of Ardabil, grandmothers spent centuries perfecting Ash-e Doogh—a brilliant white, aggressively garlicky yogurt soup meant to warm the bones. The canonical recipe demands a delicate balance of cooling dairy and fiery raw garlic, but its true secret lies in the emulsion. To keep the yogurt from breaking into a grainy mess over the heat, a raw egg and a pinch of flour are whisked into the cold base, followed by a relentless, unidirectional stir until it boils. This weeknight adaptation ditches the overnight soaking for canned chickpeas and a kefir-yogurt blend, delivering an uncompromised, historically accurate bowl of comfort in under an hour.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	white rice <i>rinsed until clear (pulse in a blender to break grains if using standard Basmati)</i>	1 large bunch	scallions <i>green parts only, finely chopped</i>
1 large	egg <i>room temperature</i>	1/2 bunch	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>
1 tbsp	all-purpose flour	6 med clove	garlic <i>peeled and mashed into a paste</i>
4 cup	plain whole-milk yogurt <i>do not use Greek</i>	1 tsp	sea salt
4 cup	plain unsweetened kefir	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
15 oz	canned chickpeas <i>thoroughly rinsed and drained</i>	2 tbsp	dried mint
1 large bunch	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped, leaves and tender stems</i>	2 tbsp	olive oil

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the rice.**

Rinse the rice under cold water until it runs clear to remove surface starch. If using standard Basmati instead of broken rice, pulse it a few times in a blender.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the cold emulsion.**

Off the heat, whisk the rinsed rice, raw egg, and flour in a large heavy-bottomed pot until smooth, then vigorously whisk in the yogurt and kefir until completely uniform.

- 2. Stir continuously in one direction.**

Place the pot over medium-high heat and immediately begin stirring with a wooden spoon. Do not stop and do not change direction until the mixture reaches a vigorous, rolling boil. This constant motion is what saves the dairy from curdling.

1. Simmer and soften.

Once boiling, the emulsion is safe. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, stir in the chickpeas, and cook uncovered for 15 to 20 minutes until the rice is tender and the broth thickens.

2. Fold in the greens.

Stir in the chopped cilantro, scallions, and dill. Let it simmer for an additional 10 to 15 minutes so the herbs release their flavor but hold onto their vibrant green color against the white broth.

3. Finish with raw garlic.

Turn off the heat entirely before stirring in the mashed garlic, salt, and black pepper. Adding the garlic off the heat preserves its sharp, pungent bite, properly balancing the cooling yogurt.

4. Bloom the mint oil.

In a small skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-low heat. Stir in the dried mint for just a few seconds until fragrant, then immediately pull it from the heat before it burns.

5. Serve immediately.

Ladle the hot soup into deep bowls and drizzle the blooming mint oil over the top. Serve with warm flatbread.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The secret to the emulsion.**

The lecithin in the egg yolk acts as an emulsifier, coating the casein proteins in the yogurt, while the constant unidirectional stirring distributes heat evenly to prevent curdling.

● **Respect the herb profile.**

Resist the urge to substitute parsley or spinach. The authentic Ardabili flavor profile relies exclusively on the trinity of cilantro, scallions or chives, and dill.

- **Optional meat.**

Though canonically vegetarian, you can drop tiny, marble-sized ground beef meatballs directly into the boiling broth alongside the chickpeas if desired; they will cook perfectly in the soup.



Shir Zardchoobeh

شیر زردچوبه

shir zard-choo-beh

In American cafes, "golden milk" is often a frothy, syrupy latte. But for first-generation Iranians, shir zardchoobeh is the real deal—a profound, slow-simmered tonic prescribed by grandmothers the moment an Ohio winter chills the bones. It relies on the deliberate steeping of whole spices in lipid-rich milk, the essential crack of black pepper to unlock the turmeric's healing properties, and the distinctly Persian addition of dried jujubes to coat a scratchy throat. It is an uncompromisingly authentic, 15-minute ritual that fills the house with the scent of cardamom and care.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	whole milk	3 small	green cardamom pods <i>lightly crushed to expose the seeds</i>
3 med	dried jujubes	1 small	whole clove
1 tsp	ground turmeric	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 small	fresh ginger <i>unpeeled and thinly sliced</i>	1 tbsp	raw honey
1 med	cinnamon stick		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the cold milk and whole spices in a small saucepan.**
Pour the whole milk into the pan and drop in the gently crushed cardamom, cinnamon stick, sliced ginger, clove, and dried jujubes before applying any heat.
- 2. Bring the mixture to a gentle, steaming simmer over medium-low heat.**
Avoid a rapid boil; you want a lazy, deliberate extraction that coaxes the aromatic oils into the milk without breaking the emulsion.
- 3. Whisk in the ground turmeric and black pepper once the milk is warm to the touch.**
The pepper is non-negotiable; its piperine acts as the essential key to unlock the turmeric's fat-soluble therapeutic compounds for your body to absorb.
- 4. Reduce the heat to its lowest setting, partially cover, and steep for 10 to 15 minutes.**
Stir occasionally to prevent scorching on the bottom until the jujubes plump up and the liquid takes on a vibrant marigold hue.
- 5. Pour the golden milk through a fine-mesh strainer into two mugs.**
Catch the whole spices and the softened jujubes—which are intensely soothing to eat, provided you avoid the pit inside.

1. Stir in the raw honey off the heat until fully dissolved.

Never boil your honey, which destroys its medicinal properties; wait just a minute for the milk to slightly cool before sweetening.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Dairy-Free Swap.**

Turmeric requires fat to be effective. If you must swap the whole milk for oat or almond milk, add a half teaspoon of virgin coconut oil or butter to the pot when simmering.

● **Finding Annab.**

Take a weekend trip to your local Middle Eastern or Asian grocer, where jujubes are often labeled 'Red Dates.' They are the true hallmark of this Persian remedy, though the drink is still highly effective without them.