

Digaag Qumbe (CHICKEN STEW WITH YOGURT AND COCONUT)

Serves 4

2 medium vine-ripened tomatoes, coarsely chopped
1 jalapeño, stemmed and coarsely chopped (use less or leave out if you don't want things too spicy)
1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and coarsely chopped
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1/2 cup plain yogurt
2 tablespoons Xawaash Spice Mix
2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more as needed
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil or canola oil
1 large red onion, finely chopped
2 large garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon minced ginger
1 baking potato, cut into bite-sized pieces
2 carrots, cut into thin coins
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces
1 cup full-fat unsweetened coconut milk
Large handful of cilantro leaves, finely chopped
Cooked rice and bananas, for serving

In the jar of a blender, combine the tomatoes, jalapeño, bell pepper, tomato paste, yogurt, xawaash, and salt and puree until smooth. Set aside. Warm the oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot set over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger and cook, stirring occasionally, until just beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in the blended tomato mixture, bring the mixture to a boil, then immediately lower the heat, cover, and cook until very fragrant, about 10 minutes. This initial cooking forms the base of the sauce.

Stir in the potato, carrots, chicken, and coconut milk. Cover the pot and cook, uncovering it to stir occasionally, until the vegetables are tender and the chicken is cooked through, about 30 minutes. Season the stew to taste with salt.

Serve hot, sprinkled with the cilantro, over cooked rice, and with bananas alongside (don't slice the bananas, just serve them whole and take a bite as you eat the stew). Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a few days and rewarmed in a heavy pot set over low heat (stir while you heat).

Source: In Bibi's Kitchen

Xawaash spice mix
Makes about 1 1/4 cups
One 2-inch piece cinnamon stick
1/2 cup cumin seeds
1/2 cup coriander seeds
2 tablespoons black peppercorns
6 cardamom pods
1 teaspoon whole cloves
2 tablespoons ground turmeric

Place the cinnamon stick in a small zip-top plastic bag, seal it, and bang it a couple of times with a rolling pin, skillet, or mallet (anything firm and heavy) to break it into small pieces. Place the cinnamon pieces, cumin, coriander, peppercorns, cardamom, and cloves in a small heavy skillet set over medium heat. Cook, stirring constantly, until the smell is very aromatic and the spices are lightly toasted, about 2 minutes. Let cool. Transfer the mixture to a clean coffee grinder and grind into a fine powder (or use a mortar and pestle and some elbow grease). Transfer the ground spices to a fine-mesh sieve set over a bowl and sift. Re-grind whatever large pieces remain in the sieve and add them to the bowl with the ground spices. Add the turmeric. Whisk well to combine and transfer the mixture to an airtight jar. Store in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months.