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LENTILS AND RICE: CLASSICS ARE CLASSICS FOR A REASON

This rice is a classic that **dates back to one of the oldest recipe books in the world**, the Kitab al-Tabikh, written in Iraq in 1226. In Arabi, the dish is called Mjadra (which comes from mujadara, meaning “pockmarked”) and can be prepared with meat as well as in the vegetarian version we have here.

By the way, this is a **great tip for those who want to consume less meat or animal products: the combination of rice and lentils is rich in amino acids**. Combining cereals such as rice with legumes like lentils offers all the essential amino acids that your body needs. Rice is rich in the amino acid methionine, but is poor in the amino acid lysine, as are other cereals. Beans, in turn, have all the essential amino acids, and are rich in lysine, but low in methionine. In this way, they complement each other and offer the complete set of essential amino acids we need, in addition to making a delicious dish (or it wouldn't have survived so many centuries, right?).

Ingredients

- For the rice and lentils:

- 1 cup of rinsed dried lentils
- 4 teaspoons of cinnamon powder
- ½ teaspoon of turmeric powder
- 2 teaspoons of sea salt
- 2 ½ cups basmati rice
- 2 cups chopped fresh herbs, such as cilantro, dill, mint or a combination of them

- For the onion and date mixture:

- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large yellow onions, diced in small cubes
- 12 dried Medjool dates, pitted and diced

Preparation

1 - Bring 2 cups of water to boil in a medium pan over high heat. Add the lentils, cinnamon, turmeric and 1 teaspoon of salt. Cover and cook until the lentils are cooked (about 10 minutes). Drain the lentils and set aside.

2 - Using the same pan, add rice, 2-1/2 cups of water and 1 teaspoon of salt. Cook uncovered over medium heat until all the water is absorbed (10 to 14 minutes).

3 - While the rice is cooking, prepare the onion and date mixture: in a frying pan, add 4 tablespoons of olive oil to the onion and a pinch of salt and cook until the onion is golden (9 to 14 minutes). Transfer the onions to a bowl.

4 - In the still hot frying pan, add the 2 tablespoons of olive oil and the dates. Heat them for 1 to 2 minutes. Mix the dates in the bowl, with the onions.

5 - To serve, place a layer of rice and lentils in a heated bowl; then add a layer of onion and date mixture and sprinkle with chopped herbs. Continue alternating layers, finishing with the onion and date mixture and a final sprinkle of herbs. Drizzle with more olive oil.