

“Chraime” - Sephardic Fish in Spicy Tomato Sauce



Chraime is a fish dish in a sauce with tomatoes, hot peppers and other spices, prepared traditionally by Israeli Jews of North African origin for the Friday night Sabbath meal and also for Rosh Hashanah and Passover.

It has become an everyday fish dish served in market cafes, commercial and industrial kitchens and at home for weekday meals, and is the definite Sephardic cuisine's answer to the Ashkenazi Gefillte fish.

There are lots of variations, but this is the secret recipe handed down to me by my dear friend Irene, after consistently overwhelming me on Friday evening Shabbat dinners. This is the ultimate in simple – amazingly tasty without the obvious - cumin and caraway (which are a mere option in my recipe).

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Serves: 4

What you need:

- 4 pieces of fish - red snapper, sea bass, halibut, grey mullet or similar firm fleshed fish filets - salted in 2 tsp. of salt
- 1 each Red, yellow and orange peppers
- 2 – 3 Hot whole red or green chillis – or to taste
- 5 cloves garlic, all roughly cut in the bottom of a wide pan
- ½ tsp. salt, or to taste
- ½ tsp. black pepper, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika
- ½ tsp. hot paprika (I use smoked hot Moroccan paprika), or to taste
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- Optional - 1 teaspoon ground cumin seeds
- Optional - 1 teaspoon caraway seeds
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/2 – 1 cups water
- 1 grated fresh tomato, or ½ can of grated canned tomatoes (pelatti)
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 bunch of fresh coriander, roughly chopped
- 1 .var. - with 3 peeled potatoes, sliced
- 2. var. with 1 cup of whole cooked chickpeas (note: kitniyot...)
- 3. var. with 2 sliced carrots
- 4. var. - all together
- Lemon wedges – to serve

How to make:

- Heat the oil at low temperature.
- Fry potatoes in a frying pan until golden. Set aside.
- Fry peppers, chillis and garlic until fragrant.
- Add the sweet paprika, turmeric, and - if using, the caraway and cumin seeds - mix together ½ cup water, grated tomato (or pelatti), tomato paste, salt and pepper. Simmer over low heat for 10 minutes.
- Return potatoes to frying pan.
- Cover the pan and cook over low heat for 15 minutes
- Add the carrots/chumus and cook until soft - turn over the potato slices, but keep them under the sauce.
- In the end, add smoked/hot paprika, the remaining water and the salted fish pieces, cover and cook shortly so the fish remains juicy. The sauce should not be too watery.
- Garnish with the reserved coriander.
- Serve warm with lemon wedges and plenty of crusty fresh bread (or crusty Matzah)

Bormuelicos – Matzah and Cheese Fritters



Preparation time: 35 minutes

Makes approx. 15 fritters

Bormuelicos (Ladino: Burmuelos, Burmuelos Bermuelos, Burmuelicos) are a type of Jewish Sephardic fritter, commonly used on Chanukah and Passover holidays, the Sephardic equivalent of the Ashkenazi Matza brei.

The dish is called in Israel by the name of Ladino name, and is similar in name and in essence to the Buñuelo, a popular Spanish fritter.

The source for the Bormuelo Fritter is the Spanish Jewish and Muslim cuisine, when Spain was under Islamic rule and was called al-Andalus.

Bormuelos took root in local cuisine and even after the end of the Reconquista, part of Christian Spanish cuisine remained, from which it moved with Latin American immigrants

and through Spanish Jewish expatriates also came into Balkan and North African cuisines in various versions.

Burmuelos are usually prepared for the holidays, when on Chanukah they are made from flour and yeast-based dough, puffed into a fritter, deep-fried and sweetened with various sweet syrups.

The most common configuration, especially among Balkan Jews, is the Burmuelus for Passover, which are prepared from a basic batter of matzah, water and eggs, to deep-fried fritters of various sizes. The dish is used in some versions as a sweet dessert, when it is sprinkled with powdered sugar, or as a supplement to various meals, where it is customary to add to the batter various spices, chopped onions and Bulgarian (Feta) cheese. Some serve it with whipped sweetened egg whites.

What you Need:

- 5 matzot
- ½ cup of water
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup of cottage cheese
- ½ cup of white cheese (Balkan style yoghurt will do)
- 150 gr. of grated Bulgarian cheese (Feta is a decent substitute)
- 150 gr. of grated hard yellow cheese
- 2 – 3 stalks of green onion
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- ½ cup of milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup oil
- Some matzameal

How to Make:

- Break up the matzah sheets and add to bowl with ½ a cup of water.
- Mix well and let rest for 10 minutes.
- Add eggs to bowl and mix well.
- Add cheeses, green onions and spices and mix until blended. Add some matzameal to thicken batter.
- Heat oil in a wide frying pan, form fritters with a large spoon and fry on both sides until golden brown. You can also brush with oil and bake in the oven.
- Tip: You can add to the batter grated carrots, corn, mushrooms, spinach or any other addition you fancy.