



# M E N U

FOR AN ENCHANTED  
VALENTINE EVENING

*Persian style*

*Leslie Powell Ahmadi*



# W E L C O M E

Dear Friends and Readers:

Welcome to this booklet of a Persian menu  
consisting of recipes, poetry, and song!  
Its pages are dedicated  
to anyone and everyone  
in the mood for an enchanting evening,  
Persian style--  
and whether you have an enchanting romance  
or friendship in mind!

‘NOOSHE JAN’

“MAY IT NOURISH YOUR SOUL!”

Please note: All food-related recipes are shared (and slightly adapted for ease of preparation) by permission of Ms. Najmieh Batmangli, master chef and author of *Food of Life: A Book of Ancient Persian and Modern Iranian Cooking and Ceremonies* (1986). Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, Inc.







## BEAUTIFUL HANDS

*This is the kind of Friend  
You are -*

*Without making me realize*

*My soul's anguished history,*

*You slip into my house at night,*

*And while I am sleeping,*

*You silently carry off*

*All my suffering and sordid past*

*In Your beautiful*

*Hands.*

*--Hafiz*



[Free translation by Daniel Ladinsky,  
from his book *The Subject Tonight is Love:  
60 Wild & Sweet Poems of Hafiz*  
(Penguin Books, 2003)]



# DINNER ENTREE I

## 'Khoresh-te Bademjan'

### SAVORY LAMB OR BEEF\* STEW

with fried eggplant and shoestring potatoes\*\*

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound stew meat (lamb or beef), cut into ¾" cubes
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ medium eggplants (or summer squash if preferred)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste and 1 large tomato, sliced up
- the juice of 1 fresh lemon
- 1 cup of French-fried shoestring potatoes  
(you can buy them frozen at the grocery store)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium pot, brown the meat and onions in half of the oil. Add the turmeric and salt.
2. Fill pot with water 1/3 full, bring to a boil, and cover. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 1 ½ hours. (Note: vegans might consider using vegetable stock/broth in place of the water for added flavor.)
3. Wash the eggplant, peel or leave unpeeled, and slice into ½ inch rounds. Sprinkle both sides with salt and let stand for about 20 minutes (the salt serves to draw out bitterness). Rinse the raw slices and pat dry.
4. With the rest of the oil, brown the eggplant on both sides and set aside on a clean paper towel (to remove excess oil). Add more oil when frying if necessary.
5. [For those who would like a heartier, more nuanced stew, parboil ½ cup of yellow or green split peas until a little more than half-cooked (over a medium flame for about 20 minutes), then set aside.]
6. In a teaspoon of oil, sauté the tomato slices in a skillet into a soft pulp. Mix in the tomato paste and sauté for another thirty seconds or so before stirring the contents into the stewing meat. Squeeze in the lemon juice as well and stir the mixture. Taste and add salt and pepper as desired.
7. Take the lid off the pot, allowing the simmering stew's liquid to cook down until it becomes less watery and somewhat saucy in consistency.
8. Insert the fried eggplant slices into the stew, and if you prepared the half-cooked split peas, stir those in as well. Simmer the stew uncovered on low for another 15 minutes, or until the split peas (if you added them) have turned tender but not mushy.
9. Your stew is ready! To make it extra delicious, garnish each serving individually with fried shoestring potatoes. Serve it with Persian-style rice and a delicious yogurt side dish called *mast-o khiar* ("yogurt and cucumbers").
10. Add fresh stalks of green onion and wedges of pita bread/flatbread to the table, and your Persian-themed meal is complete! *Nooshe jan!*

(serves 2-3)

\*vegetarians and vegans: this dish is also delicious without meat!

\*\*eggplant can be substituted by summer squash if preferred (but personally I love the eggplant!)

The blade of the executioner  
is sharply curved.

So is the eyebrow of my beloved.  
Both draw blood  
when they cut.

But Oh,  
the difference between  
this cut and that cut!



*translated from persian, poet unknown*

# DINNER ENTREE 2

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## *'Polo va Taahdig'* PERSIAN RICE with crisped potatoes

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### INGREDIENTS

1 medium (standard-sized) pot.  
a nonstick surface is ideal, but other  
pots will also do.

1 colander

3 cups basmati rice

3 tablespoons vegetables Oil

1 tablespoon salt

4 medium potatoes, washed, peeled,  
and sliced lengthwise into 1/4" slices  
(Idaho potatoes tend to work well)

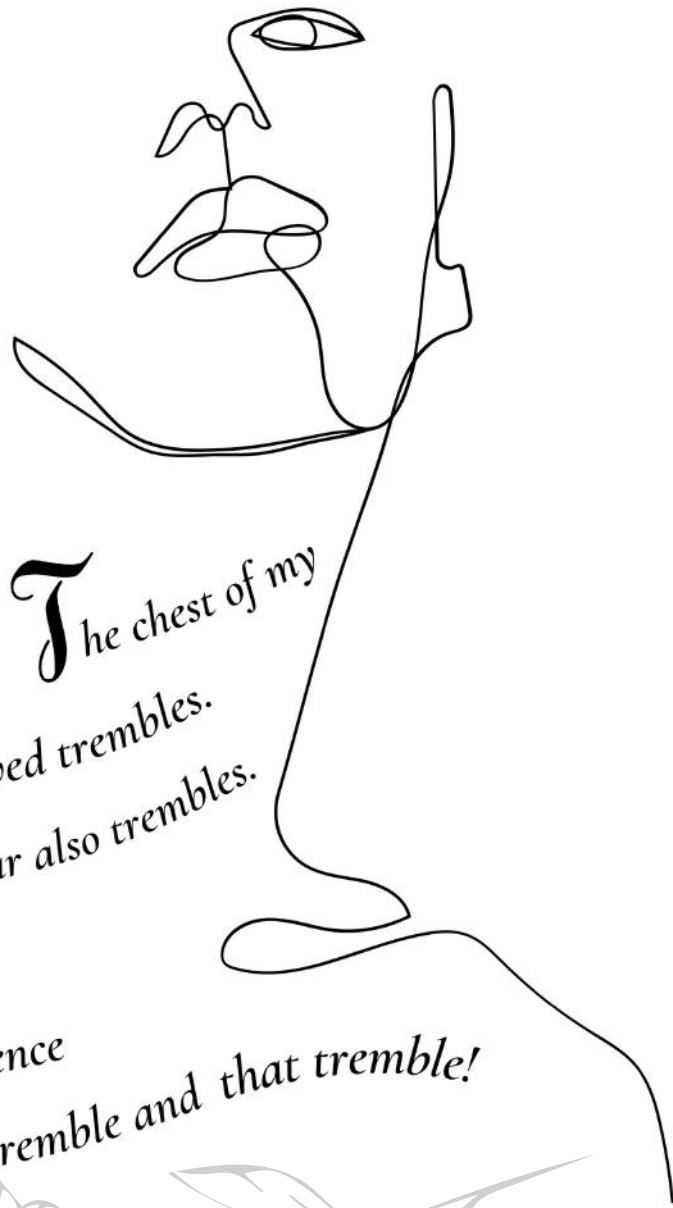
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### DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse the rice three to four times (by putting the grains into the selected pot, putting enough cold water in the pot to cover it, and swishing the water around to remove excess starch or residue, then draining the water).
2. After draining the rice again, fill the same pot half-full with water and salt and bring it to a boil.
3. When the rice is half-cooked (i.e., when a grain you squeeze between your thumb and forefinger yields to the pressure, but only enough to break into bits and not so much as to end up pasty or mashed. The color of the grains looks somewhat translucent at this stage.) You can first check its status 5-7 minutes after the water begins to boil.
5. Empty the rice into a colander to drain all the water.
6. Coat the bottom of the pot with the vegetable oil.
7. Once oil is hot, place the potato slabs in the bottom of the pot so as to cover the whole surface.

8. Shake just a little bit of salt on the surface of the potato slabs to give it a little extra flavor (optional).
9. Return the drained rice to the pot so that it covers the potato slabs.
10. With a large spoon or spatula handle, poke the rice through to the bottom of the pot to form 3-4 little "wells" (which will allow steam from the bottom to cook the rice through).
11. Cover the mouth of the pot with a paper towel or clean dish towel, then cover the paper towel with a lid or a plate (it helps keep the rice grains fluffy and separate).
12. Turn the burner to medium-high heat and leave it there for 2 minutes or so (to start the process of potatoes crisping). Then turn the heat to low.
13. If you are cooking with a nonstick pot, taste the rice for "doneness" after 20 minutes. Also, dig down to check one of the slabs of potatoes at the bottom of the pot to see if it has crisped to a golden-brown color. If so, then turn the flame off. If not, turn the flame to low again and give it 3-5 more minutes. If, however, you are NOT cooking with a nonstick pot, taste the rice for "doneness" after just ten minutes, to prevent the potato slabs from burning.
14. When both the rice and potatoes are done, turn off the heat and wait for a minute or so to make it easier to remove the potatoes from the bottom with a spatula. Then do just that: dig into the bottom carefully removing all the crunchy potatoes and share them when serving your delicious mound of Persian-style rice!
15. Serve it with a savory stew, mast-o khiar (yogurt and cucumber), and wedges of pita bread or flatbread. Enjoy!

(serves 2-3)



*The chest of my  
beloved trembles.  
The city of Lar also trembles.  
But Oh,  
what a difference  
between this tremble and that tremble!*



*translated from persian, poet unknown*



# DINNER ENTREE 3

*'Mast-o Khiar'*  
CUCUMBER YOGURT  
with herbs

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 long cucumber
- ½ cup golden raisins (the standard variety will work as well)
- 3 cups plain yogurt (whole milk variety recommended)
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup chopped scallions
- 1 tablespoon chopped mint
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill weed
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 3 tablespoons chopped walnuts
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh or dried mint for garnish
- 1 dried rosebud and a few petals (optional)

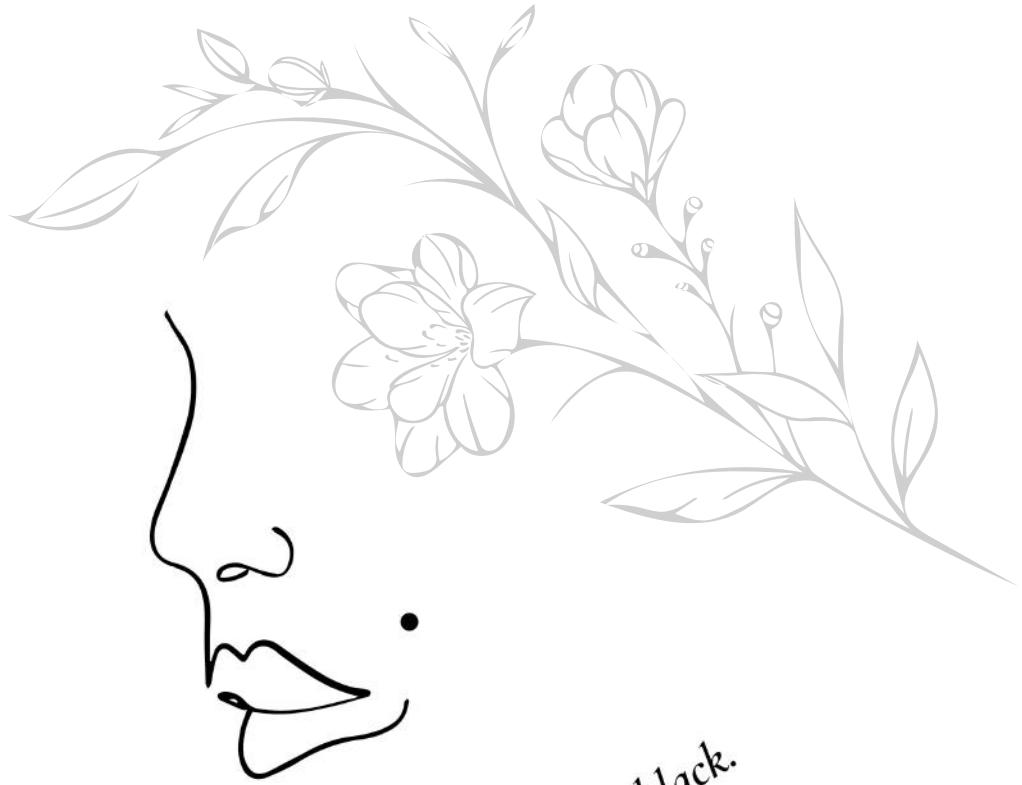
## DIRECTIONS

1. Peel and grate cucumber
2. Soak raisins in cold water for about five minutes, then drain.
3. In a serving bowl, combine yogurt, sour cream, cucumbers, scallions, mint, dill weed, garlic, chopped walnuts, and raisins. Mix thoroughly and season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Garnish with ½ teaspoon mint, plus the rosebud and petals.
5. Refrigerate for at least one hour before serving.
6. Serve alongside stew and rice, or alone with wedges of pita or flatbread!

(serves 2-3)







*A beauty mark is black.*

*Both of them make your insides  
burn. But Oh, the difference  
between this burn and that burn!*

*A peppercorn is also black.*

*translated from persian, poet unknown*

P E R S I A N  
P L A Y L I S T  
O F L O V E S O N G S \*

*A R T I S T*

*S O N G*

Artoush

*Nefrin*

*(the original version is best)*

Faramarz Aslani

*Age ye Rooz*

Aida Shahghasemi

*Lilly and the Moon*



\*Hyperlinks included.

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PLEASE ENJOY AN  
EVENING OF ROMANCE,  
FRIENDSHIP, AND LOVE  
OF ALL KINDS!

