Poplar Creek Public Library District's

SPICE CLUB

CUMIN RECIPES

September 2025

You will find this dish in Lebanese, Syrian, Turkish, and Jewish communities throughout Mexico, especially in the Yucatán, Puebla, and Mexico City. It is very much like its Middle Eastern counterpart, with lots of onions that are cooked in a generous amount of olive oil until golden and caramelized, then cooked some more with rice and lentils. It's the spoonful of ancho chile powder added with the cumin that makes it clear that this is firmly part of the Mexican repertoire.

Excerpt and recipe from the following cookbook

TREASURES OF THE MEXICAN TABLE : CLASSIC RECIPES, LOCAL SECRETS

by Pati Jinich

Call #: 641.5972 Jin

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RICE WITH LENTILS AND CARAMELIZED ONIONS / ARROZ CON LENTEJAS

Makes 8 Servings

1 cup lentils, rinsed and picked over

3 bay leaves

6 tablespoons olive oil

2 large white onions, coarsely chopped

2 cups extra-long-grain white rice or jasmine rice

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon ground ancho chile, or more to taste

¼ teaspoon ground turmeric

¼ teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste

6 cups chicken or vegetable broth or water

1. Combine the lentils, bay leaves, and 4 cups water in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium, cover partially, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the lentils are just cooked and soft but not mushy. Drain, remove the bay leaves, and set aside.

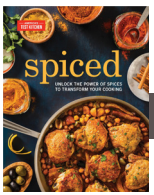
2. Heat ¼ cup of the olive oil in a Dutch oven or large heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes. The onions will first soften and become translucent and then they will brown, which is what you want.

3. Clear a space in the middle of the pot, add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, and then add the rice. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring gently with a wooden spoon. The rice will change from grayish white to bright white and feel heavier in the spoon. Don't let it brown. Make room in the middle of the pot once again, add the cooked lentils, all the spices, and the salt and stir well. Add the broth or water and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to the lowest possible setting, cover, and cook for 20 to 25 minutes, until most or all of the liquid has been absorbed and the rice is tender. Remove the lid and check to see that the rice is cooked. If it is still a bit al dente, add a couple more tablespoons of water if necessary, cook for a few more minutes, and test again. When the rice is ready, remove from the heat and let rest, covered, for 5 minutes.

4. Fluff with a fork, taste and adjust the salt, and serve.

Butternut squash is great when cut into cubes and roasted on its own—until you taste it spiced up. We turned to the spice cabinet to accent squash's earthy, sweet flavor in a new way. We found that warm spices, such as cinnamon and cumin, have a delicate sweetness of their own, which complemented that quality in the squash. For a tender texture and nice browning, we cut the squash into 1-inch pieces and roasted it in a 425-degree oven after tossing the pieces with the mix of spices. We made this spiced squash a super-special side by drizzling it with an easy butter sauce, flavored with honey, lemon, and thyme. It was a rich and sweet but also a bright counterpoint to the spices. You'll never eat plain squash again. When peeling the squash, be sure to also remove the fibrous yellow flesh just beneath the skin.

Excerpt and recipe from the following cookbook



SPICED: UNLOCK THE POWER OF SPICES TO TRANSFORM YOUR COOKING

by America's Test Kitchen

Call #: 641.6383 Spi

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SPICE-ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH HONEY-LEMON BUTTER

Makes 4 Servings

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch cayenne pepper

3 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 tablespoon honey

1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme or ¼ teaspoon dried

1 teaspoon lemon juice

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Whisk oil, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, cumin, cinnamon, and cayenne together in large bowl. Add squash and toss until evenly coated. Arrange squash in even layer on prepared sheet and roast until tender and browned on bottom, 30 to 35 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, microwave butter, honey, and ¼ teaspoon salt in small bowl until butter is melted, about 30 seconds. Stir in thyme and lemon juice. Using spatula, transfer squash to serving platter. Drizzle with butter mixture and serve.

SPICE-ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH HONEY-LIME BUTTER

Substitute ground allspice for cinnamon, 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives for thyme, and lime juice for lemon juice.

SPICE-ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH HONEY-ORANGE BUTTER

Substitute ground coriander for cinnamon, oregano for thyme, and orange juice for lemon juice.

Another Yucatán classic, this easy-to-make grilled chicken is my go-to for simple entertaining. The marinade, which gets its beautiful red color from achiote paste—made from annatto seeds (look for the paste in the international aisle at your grocery store or order it online)—gives the meat a ton of flavor and the fresh citrus juices help tenderize it. Spatchcocking the chicken (when you remove the backbone and press down on the breastbone so it lies flat) means the bird cooks more evenly and the skin gets nicely grilled all over. It's easy to spatchcock the chicken yourself with a good set of kitchen shears, but you can also ask your butcher to do it for you. If you don't have a grill (or don't feel like grilling), you can also roast this in a 400°F oven for 1 hour, or until the juices run clear. I usually serve this with the Caesar Salad with Crispy Quinoa "Croutons" and Elotes—a really winning combo.

Excerpt and recipe from the following cookbook

MY MEXICAN KITCHEN : 100 RECIPES RICH WITH TRADITION, FLAVOR, AND SPICE

by Eva Longoria

Call #: 641.5972 Lon

Available for checkout from the Poplar Creek Public Library District.
This is also available as an eBook.

POLLO ASADO

Makes 4-6 Servings

½ cup fresh orange juice (from 1 to 2 oranges)

¼ cup fresh lime juice (from 2 to 3 limes)

¼ cup fresh grapefruit juice (from ¼ to ½ grapefruit)

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

4 garlic cloves, minced or grated

2 tablespoons crumbled achiote paste

Kosher salt

2 teaspoons dried Mexican oregano

1 teaspoon ground cumin

⅛ teaspoon ground cloves

1 whole chicken (about 4 pounds), spatchcocked

1. In a bowl or baking dish that will comfortably hold the chicken, whisk together the orange juice, lime juice, grapefruit juice, olive oil, garlic, achiote paste, salt (I use 1 teaspoon per pound of meat), oregano, cumin, and cloves. Add the chicken, turning it over to coat evenly, then cover the bowl with plastic wrap and marinate for at least 2 hours and up to 8 hours, turning halfway through.

2. Heat a charcoal or gas grill to medium-low (if using a charcoal grill, you may want to bank your coals to one side and cook the chicken over indirect heat). Set the chicken on the grate skin-side down and grill, with the lid closed, for 50 minutes to 1 hour (or until a thermometer inserted into the leg/thigh joint registers 165°F), flipping every 15 minutes so the skin gets nice and crispy and the chicken cooks evenly.

3. Transfer to a carving board and tent with foil. Let rest for at least 10 minutes before carving and serving.

Did You Know?

- Cumin's culinary history dates back to 5000 B.C. It was used by the ancient Egyptians in mummification.
- Today, cumin grows throughout the Middle East and North Africa.
- Cumin is an annual plant and a member of the parsley family.

Source: The Encyclopedia of Spices & Herbs: an essential guide to the flavors of the world by Padma Lakshmi with Judith Sutton.

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