Afghan Cooks

AN AFGHAN KITCHEN NEWSLETTER

Thanksgiving Recipes

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Sheerchaimasu

RECIPE 01 · SIDE · MAKE AHEAD

Roasted Shallot Mashed Potatoes with Sumac & Saffron

Mashed potatoes are a great dish to make ahead. Problem is they get stiff and need a lot more milk to loosen them the next day. The fix? Add extra cream and butter so they're the perfect consistency when you're ready to serve. These have sumac roasted into the puréed shallots, saffron in the cream and butter, and they're topped with everyone's favorite garnish: crispy fried onions.

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SUMAC SHALLOTS

- 4 shallots, cut in half
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tsp sumac
- ½ tsp salt

CRISPY FRIED ONIONS

- 4 large onions, sliced thinly (a mandoline works great)
- Oil for frying

POTATOES

- 8–10 potatoes (about one 5 lb bag), peeled, scrubbed and quartered
- 2 tsp salt, for the boiling water
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 sticks butter
- 3 large pinches saffron
- 1 tsp salt
- Black pepper to taste

Method

1. **Roast the shallots.** Put the shallots on a baking sheet and cover with the olive oil, sumac and salt. Roast at 425°F for 20 minutes, or until charred and soft. Purée and set aside.

2. **Fry the onions.** Fry the onions in hot oil in a frying pan. Be patient: they will take a while to get very dark. Don't overcrowd the pan, you don't want them to caramelize. Once they are very dark brown, almost burnt, move them to a rack with a cloth underneath to catch the oil. This helps them crisp up.

3. **Boil the potatoes.** Boil the potatoes in a pot of water with the 2 tsp salt. Once they are fork tender, drain and set aside.

4. **Make the saffron cream.** Put the heavy cream in a saucepan, add the butter and let it melt, then add the saffron, salt and pepper. Keep this mixture warm.

5. **Mash.** Add the potatoes to a bowl and mash vigorously until almost completely smooth. Stir in the puréed shallots. Add the saffron cream slowly, making sure all of it is incorporated. The potatoes will be very slack and loose. Use a mixer if you want them smoother, but I like them with some texture.

6. **Serve.** When you reheat them they'll be the most perfect consistency. Top with the crispy fried onions right before serving.

RECIPE 02 · MAIN

Butter-Braised Turkey

You carve the turkey anyway, might as well cook it that way.

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TURKEY

- 12 lbs turkey parts (I used 4 legs, 2 large wings, 2 large thighs and 2 boneless breasts)
- 2–3 sticks butter (½–¾ lb), softened

SPICE MIX

- 2 tbsp salt (Morton's kosher)
- 1 tbsp ground coriander
- 1 tbsp cumin
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp onion powder
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 tbsp Aleppo pepper
- 1 tbsp black pepper

Method

1. **Make the spiced butter.** Mix the salt and spices, then add the softened butter and make sure it's well mixed.
2. **Coat and chill.** Place the turkey parts in a roasting pan and cover them with the butter. Cover and chill for 2–3 hours, until the butter is hard.
3. **Braise.** Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cook covered for 2 hours, turning once.
4. **Pull the breast.** The breast may be done at this point. Check that it reads 155°F and remove it. You can reheat it later.
5. **Finish the dark meat.** Uncover and keep cooking until the thighs reach 155°F. Remove and serve.

RECIPE 03 · SIDE

Qabli Pulau Stuffing

You know this is the dish you're bringing to Friendsgiving this year.

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STUFFING

- 1 stick butter (8 tbsp)
- 1 cup diced onion
- ½ cup slivered carrots
- 4 garlic cloves, minced or grated
- 2 tsp char masala
- ⅓ cup raisins
- 12–16 oz bread cubes (1 bag)
- 2 cups mushroom broth (any broth works, or just water)

Method

1. **Brown the onions.** Melt the butter until it starts to bubble. Add the onions and cook for 5 minutes, stirring often, until they just start to brown.
2. **Build the flavor.** Add the carrots and cook another 3 minutes. Add the garlic and char masala and cook another minute, stirring. Add the raisins and stir another minute.
3. **Toast the bread.** Add the bread and stir well, making sure it's all coated and starts to brown.
4. **Steam.** Add the broth and keep stirring, adding more 1 tbsp at a time if you need it. Lower the heat, cover and let steam for 10–15 minutes. Serve.

TIP Slide it under the broiler for a few minutes to create a crispy "tadig" on top.

RECIPE 04 · SIDE

Cumin-Scented Roast Carrots over Lemon Garlic Labneh

CARROTS

- 1 bag rainbow carrots
- 2 tsp whole cumin seed
- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp coriander

LABNEH

- 1 cup labneh (Greek yogurt works too)
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp grated garlic

TO GARNISH

- Pomegranate seeds

Method

1. **Roast the carrots.** Preheat the oven to 425°F. Wash and peel the carrots and put them on a baking sheet. Add the cumin, olive oil, salt and coriander, making sure every carrot is coated. Roast for 15 minutes until charred, then lower the heat to 375°F and cook another 10–15 minutes until soft.
2. **Make the labneh.** Mix the lemon juice and garlic together and fold gently into the labneh. Don't overmix: you want to keep the labneh thick.
3. **Plate.** Spread the labneh on a serving plate or platter, place the carrots on top and garnish with pomegranate seeds.

RECIPE 05 · CONDIMENT · MAKE AHEAD

Cranberry & Zeresht (Barberry) Sauce

BERRIES

- 1 bag (12 oz) fresh cranberries
- 1 cup barberries (zeresht)
- 1 shallot, chopped
- Zest of 1 orange
- Juice of the orange (about ½ cup)

SYRUP & SPICES

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup honey
- ½ cup sugar or jaggery
- 1½ tsp cardamom
- 3 cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp allspice
- ½ tsp salt

Method

1. **Start the berries.** Put the cranberries and zeresht in a pot with the orange zest, juice, shallot, spices and salt. Stir and cook on medium heat until the berries soften and start to release their juice, about 5 minutes.
2. **Add the honey and water.** Add the honey and keep stirring and cooking. Add the water and stir until it becomes thick and syrupy.
3. **Sweeten and simmer.** Add the jaggery or sugar and stir until completely melted. Cover and cook on low for another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

MAKE AHEAD Keeps up to a week, tightly covered in the fridge.

RECIPE 06 · DESSERT

Pumpkin Firini Trifle

My brother actually passed on this dessert. I begged him to try it just to see if it worked. He ate three servings.

PUMPKIN FIRINI

- 1 can pumpkin purée
- 2 cups milk (or a mix of milk and heavy cream)
- ⅓–½ cup jaggery or brown sugar, to taste
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 tbsp cornstarch

CARDAMOM CREAM

- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- 1 tsp cardamom
- 1 tsp vanilla

TO ASSEMBLE

- Trifle dish or bowl
- 2 packages Biscoff, crushed into rough crumbles
- Shaved chocolate or ground pistachios, plus extra cardamom

Method

1. **Caramelize the pumpkin.** Heat the pumpkin in a saucepan and cook until it gets nice and brown and caramelized.

2. **Make the firini.** Add all but about ¼ cup of the milk and stir until well combined with almost no lumps. Mix the remaining milk with the cornstarch until smooth. Add the salt, cinnamon and jaggery to the pot and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved. Add the cornstarch mixture and keep stirring until the pudding is thick and coats the back of a spoon. Pour into a dish, cover with plastic wrap and chill.

3. **Whip the cream.** Beat the cream with a stand mixer to soft peaks, then add the sugar one tablespoon at a time and keep whisking. Add the cardamom and vanilla and whip until thick and holding its shape.

4. **Assemble.** Spread a layer of Biscoff crumbs in the bottom of the dish. Add the firini and smooth it over, then the whipped cream. Repeat: Biscoff, firini, cream. Smooth the top and finish with chocolate shavings or ground pistachios and a little more cardamom.

RECIPE 07 · DESSERT · CHILL OVERNIGHT

Sheerchaimasu

SERVES ABOUT 8 · 8×8 PAN

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CHAI SOAK

- 1 cup water
- 5 tsp loose-leaf black tea (or 5 good tea bags)
- 1¼ cups whole milk
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 3 tbsp (1.7 oz) jaggery or brown sugar

ASSEMBLY

- 24 ladyfingers
- Cocoa powder and slivered pistachios, for topping

SAFFRON CREAM

- 12 oz mascarpone
- ½ cup caster sugar (or granulated, see step 3)
- ¼ tsp saffron, ground with a pinch of sugar
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- ½ tsp rose water
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp salt

Method

1. **Make the chai.** Boil the water and tea until very dark, about 2–5 minutes. Add the milk, cinnamon, cardamom and jaggery and simmer until dissolved and very dark, another 10 minutes. Strain and set aside while you make the cream.
2. **Cream the mascarpone.** Whip the mascarpone (with the sugar, if you're using caster sugar) in a large bowl or stand mixer until smooth and creamy. If you're using granulated sugar, don't add it yet. Set aside. Grind the saffron with a pinch of sugar in a mortar and pestle.
3. **Cook the yolks.** Separate the eggs. Put the yolks in a heatproof bowl over a pot of simmering water (add the granulated sugar now, if using). Whisk until pale and thick, then set aside to cool.
4. **Whip the cream.** In another bowl, whip the cream with the rose water, cardamom and salt.
5. **Fold.** Gently fold the yolks and saffron into the mascarpone, then fold in the whipped cream.
6. **Assemble.** Dip the ladyfingers in the chai for 6–7 seconds and layer them in the dish. Top with half the cream and smooth it over. Repeat.
7. **Chill.** Cover and chill overnight. Dust with cocoa and top with pistachios.