

From the Kitchen of Jessica Soffer

While eavesdropping on her mother and aunt, Lorca learns about *masgouf* for the first time (pages 19-20).

MASGOUF

Ingredients:

Whole carp (or other white fish, such as red snapper, sea bass or sole)

Equal parts turmeric, tamarind, black pepper

Olive oil

Lemons

Rock salt

Optional condiments: pickled onions, *ambah* (mango cured in salt, turmeric, lemon and salt) or diced tomatoes with garlic

Directions:

Ask your fishmonger to butterfly fish and leave the skin on. Otherwise, clean and scale fish, and slice all the way down the back so it can lie flat.

Brush both sides of fish with plenty of olive oil.

Cover the flesh with a thin layer of the spice mixture.

Season both sides generously with salt.

Indoors:

Place the fish skin side up in a shallow baking dish that's been covered with tin foil. Cook under a preheated broiler for 7-10 minutes, or until the skin is crispy. Flip the fish and cook just until flesh is opaque, about 2 minutes.

Outdoors:

Impale fish vertically on wooden stakes and put directly into fire pit or place the opened fish in a well-oiled wire grill basket, tail down, head up and cook until done, turning now and again for even heat dispersal. Cooking will take anywhere from 45 minutes to a couple of hours, depending on size of fish and intensity of fire.

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Lorca wants to make something for her mother, who has come down with a cold. Victoria hits upon *shakrlama*, and they bake the cookies together (pages 142-156).

SHAKRLAMA

Ingredients:

½ cup of butter 1 teaspoon rosewater

½ cup confectioners' sugar ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup and 1 teaspoon sifted flour

A pinch of salt

¼ teaspoon ground cardamom Handful of pistachio halves or almonds for decoration

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350F.

Combine butter, sugar, flour, cardamom, rosewater, vanilla and salt.

Knead well.

Form into cakes about 2 inches in diameter.

Space them one inch apart on baking sheet covered with parchment paper.

Decorate with nuts.

Refrigerate for 15 minutes.

Make for 8-10 minutes, or until cookies are a pale golden brown but cooked through.

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When Victoria first meets Lorca, she teaches her to make *bamia* (pages 128-131).

BAMIA

Ingredients:

2 teaspoons olive oil

1 chopped onion

3 teaspoons grated garlic

2 cups stewed tomatoes

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon of each: cardamom, curry powder, ground ginger

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of each: paprika, red pepper flakes, celery seeds

Lemon juice, salt and black pepper (to taste)

1½ pounds fresh okra, washed and chopped into inch-long pieces

Directions:

Heat oil in large stockpot.

Saute onions until translucent.

Add garlic and sauté until fragrant.

Add tomatoes and spices and cook on medium heat for five minutes, stirring consistently.