

TANGIA

(Slow-Cooked Beef with Herbs and Spices)

Serves 6.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a Moroccan cookbook.

The cookbook labelled this as “a bachelor’s dish.” I think it’s suitable for anyone who likes beef and a little extra spice. The flavor is mild though. This dish is also economical because you can use an inexpensive cut of beef.

Ingredients:

1 kg (2 pounds 4 ounces) chuck steak or other stew beef.
1½ yellow onions (about 1 pound (450g) total weight)
4 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons ras el hanout (see notes at end)
½ teaspoon (or more if you prefer) harissa (see notes at end)
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 to 4 tomatoes (9 to 12 ounces (255 to 340g) total weight)
Zest from 1½ lemons
Optional: Juice from 1 lemon
2 teaspoons honey
1 tablespoon chopped coriander (cilantro)
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf (Italian) parsley
Sesame seeds for garnish

Directions:

If the beef is not already cubed, cut into 1-inch (2.5cm) pieces and place in a deep roasting pan or a casserole dish. Combine the meat, chopped onions, garlic, oil, ras el hanout, harissa, and black pepper. Stir, cover, and let sit for a few minutes while you prepare the other ingredients.

Heat a pan of water (enough to cover the tomatoes when submerged) to boiling. Cut an X in the bottom of each tomato and immerse in the boiling water for about 30 seconds to loosen the skin. Remove the skin and discard. The tomatoes can be cut in half and seeded. You can also strain the seeds, returning the juice to the tomatoes. Add the tomatoes, about ⅔ of the lemon zest (reserve the remainder for garnish), and honey to the beef. You can also add the juice of one lemon. Chop the coriander and parsley and add to the pot.

Heat the oven to 275°F (135°C). Cover the casserole dish with a lid or foil. Bake for 3½ hours, checking halfway through the cooking time to see if the pot is boiling dry. You can add water or stock, if necessary, to restore moisture to the pot. (I didn’t need to add any liquid to mine.)

Remove from the oven and let rest while you prepare rice or couscous on the side, if needed. (You could serve this stew in bowls with bread on the side.) Taste the stew and adjust for salt, if necessary, before serving. Plate and garnish with the remaining lemon zest or sesame seeds.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.



STEP-BY-STEP

1



Here is my *mise en place* for this recipe. The ras el hanout (the little box in front of the salt) was found at a local store. You can mix your own. There are recipes on the Internet and they all differ because there is no one accepted formula for this spice blend. The jar behind the onions is my harissa, another spice blend, which is made as a wet paste. I have a recipe for harissa on my web site (look in Basics), but you can also find recipes on the Internet.

2



For this recipe I bought stew beef at the local warehouse store. The pieces are already cut up. You could buy an expensive piece of beef, such as chuck, and cut it into 1-inch (2.5cm) pieces.

3



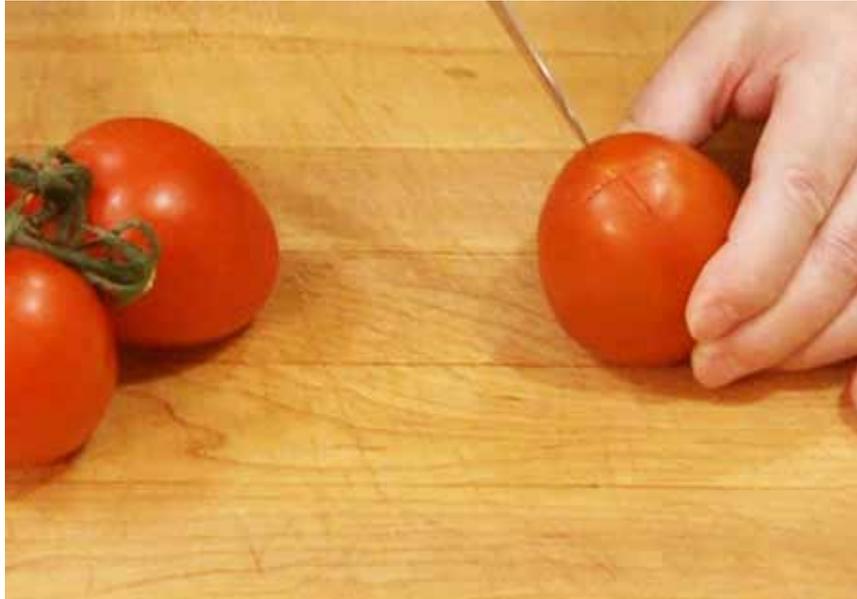
Chop an onion to a medium chop. It doesn't need to be perfect for this dish.

4



Mix the meat with the onions, garlic, and spices. Cover and set aside. The mixture will help flavor the meat.

5



Cut an X in the bottom of each tomato. This will make it easier to remove the skin after the next step.

6



Immerse the tomatoes in boiling water for about 30 seconds to loosen the skin.

7



Starting at the bottom where you cut the X, peel off the loosened skin and discard.

8



To seed the tomatoes (which might not be necessary for this dish, but some people think it's important), cut the tomato in half and either squeeze out the seeds or push them out with a sharp knife.

9



Some cooks say the juice surrounding the seeds has more flavor than the tomato flesh. I pushed the juice through a strainer and then discarded the seeds. The captured juice was returned to the tomatoes.

10



Zest the lemons by removing only the yellow surface, leaving the white pith behind. This is easily done with a microplane grater.

11



Optional: You can squeeze the juice from one lemon and add it to the tangia. I like the way lemon juice brightens up the flavor of some dishes.

12



Chop the coriander (cilantro) and parsley. It doesn't need to be chopped too fine.

13

Add the lemon zest, optional juice, honey, coriander, and parsley to the beef mixture and blend.

14

Finally, add the tomatoes with their juice and blend again. Cover the pot with a lid or aluminum foil and bake in a 275°F (140°C) oven for 3½ hours. Halfway through the cooking time you can check the pot for moisture. If the stew appears to be boiling dry, you can add a little water or stock. My stew did not need any liquid.

15

Here is my tangia after coming out of the oven. The flavor is rich and savory without being overly spicy. At this point you can taste the stew and adjust for salt, if necessary.

16

I prefer this type of meal served over cooked rice. Couscous is traditional. Naan or nan, a type of flat bread, can also be served with this stew.

Conclusion

This stew is fairly easy to make because it is assembled and baked. There is no need to brown the beef in advance or marinate for a lengthy time. The baking time, 3½ hours in a low oven, is what tenderizes an inexpensive cut of beef. I really enjoy dishes like this served over rice. It's not a fancy food, and not the prettiest either, but it is good comfort food, especially on a cold and stormy day.

Notes

Ras el Hanout: A little research shows that there is no one recipe for this spice blend. One cookbook says that each spice merchant has their own ideas for the perfect blend. You can buy the spice in some grocery stores or look on the Internet for recipes. You'll find many and they differ widely. I use (all spices are ground): 2 teaspoons each of ginger and coriander; 1½ teaspoons each of cinnamon, black pepper, and turmeric; 1¼ teaspoons nutmeg; 1 teaspoon allspice, and ½ teaspoons cloves. Combine in a jar and store in the cupboard. You can grind your own spices if you have an electric coffee mill.

Harissa is a Tunisian spice blend paste, best stored in the refrigerator. I make mine by using: 3 tablespoons chili powder (I prefer sweet California mild chili), 1 tablespoon dried mint leaves (you can dry fresh mint by hanging it by a string for several days), 1 tablespoon ground coriander, 1 tablespoon ground cumin, 1 tablespoon ground caraway seeds (this might be difficult to find; so grind your own), 10 garlic cloves, ½ cup (125ml) olive oil, and 3 tablespoons tomato paste. Blend well and store in a jar in the refrigerator.