



## Moroccan Couscous Salad

Delicious, sweet, cold salad perfect for picnic, BBQ, or pot luck. Follow the recipe discussed in class or add your own ingredients to make this wonderful dish full of flavor and color! You can make it a side or the star attraction of your table.



**Morocco** is located in North Africa. Officially Kingdom of Morocco is ruled by a king. The Arabic name for Morocco is "Al Maghrib", which means, "Where the sun has set". It is the culinary star of North Africa - the doorway between Europe and Africa.

### **Couscous**

Couscous is granular semolina (a coarse wheat often used to make pasta), which has been moistened with water, lightly covered in flour, and rolled into tiny beadlike pellets. It is available year-round.

How to select: Available precooked in large supermarkets in bulk or boxes with other prepackaged side dishes.

How to prepare: Steam or combine with boiling liquid and let stand until the liquid has been absorbed. Typically served with stews in the Middle East and North Africa, and in salads in the United States.

### **Moroccan Cuisine and Culture**

Moroccan cuisines are a mix of African, Middle Eastern, Arab, Mediterranean and Berber influences. The cuisine of Morocco is rated among the best in the world, and rightly so. There are few places where food is more carefully and artistically prepared, more delightfully served, and more enjoyed than in this country.

Unlike the herb-based cooking across the sea to the north, Moroccan cooking is characterized by rich spices. Cumin, coriander, saffron, chilies, dried ginger, cinnamon, and paprika are on the cook's shelf, and in her mortar.



*Harissa*, a paste of garlic, chiles, olive oil, and salt, makes for fiery dishes that stand out among the milder foods that are more the Mediterranean norm.

Ras el hanout (which means head of the shop) names a dried spice mixture that combines anywhere from 10 to 100 spices. Each vendor has his own secret recipe (hence the name), and no two are exactly alike.

Chicken or lamb, along with bread, accompanied with cold and hot salads and vegetables are popular all over Morocco. Beef is another common meat consumed in most parts of this region.

Savory foods are enhanced with fruits, dried and fresh -- apricots, dates, figs, and raisins, to name a few.

Nuts are prominent; pine nuts, almonds, and pistachios show up in all sorts of unexpected places.

Moroccan sweets are rich and dense confections of cinnamon, almond, and fruit perfumes that are rolled in phyllo dough, soaked in honey, and stirred into puddings.

### **Cooking in Morocco**

The first, intended for important guests, is the work of skilled chefs. It requires such intensive supervision that the host does not participate. He merely oversees the banquet with his sons and servants. No women are present. The men squat on mattresses or pillows around low, beautifully inlaid tables. The host claps his hands and the meal begins. The meal is a feast for the gods and indeed it begins and ends with Bsmillah--God's blessing.



In the second category of cookery are the wonderful dishes prepared with loving care by the mistresses- Dadas- of the homes. Here, where time does not seem to count, she spends hours with her glazed earthenware and copper cooking dishes and her kanoun, the movable clay brazier. Her kitchen is austere, and the charcoal which perfumes the kebabs and allows the sauces to simmer is the only source of heat. There are no chairs. A folded carpet serves as a seat. The Dada is dressed in a long colorful robe tucked up in front and her wide sleeves are held in place with a twisted cord.



### **How a Dinner is Served in Morocco**

A guest invited for a meal occupies a place next to the host. A basin to wash your hands is provided on a knee-high round table. Once your hands are wiped clean, wait for the host to bless the food before you become a slave to your appetite.

A hostess in Morocco might take a week to prepare a suitable dinner for her honored guests.

The dinner starts with Bstilla - a crisp pastry, rolled as thin as tissue paper, filled with chicken in a mixture "sweet and peppery, soft and violent.", followed by the typical brochette or kebab flavored with bits of beef or lamb fat.

Next comes the Tajine, chicken or meat in a spicy stew which has been simmered for many hours, and it is served with a flat bread called Khubz.


After the Tajine, a Batinjaan- eggplant salad or chopped tomato salad- is served as a separate course.

Then comes Couscous, that marvelous Moroccan national dish made of semolina, cooked to perfection, each grain separate from the other.

The dinner is completed with slices or wedges of peeled melon, pastries made with honey and almond like the Middle Eastern Baklava, and finally a small glass of mint tea.

In Morocco, as in most Arab lands, every household makes its own bread. It is made from semolina flour without shortening or milk. An invocation to God is made before commencing the sacred act of kneading. When the bread has been properly shaped, each family puts its own mark or stamp on it before sending it via the children to a common bakery oven.

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