Food Explorers

Jeweled Butternut & Date Couscous

Morocco | Cooking

Spotlight: Butternut squash & Medjool dates

Moroccan markets are called souks, and they have whole streets of nothing but spices — cones of red, yellow and brown piled higher than your head. Our couscous sparkles like a market stall.

Ingredients (makes 8–14 portions)

- 1 1/2–2 cups couscous
- 2–2 1/2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 butternut squash
- 8–12 Medjool dates
- 1–1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1–1 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/4–1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 3–4 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 bunch fresh mint or parsley
- 1–2 lemons
- 1–1 1/2 tsp salt

Steps

1. An adult brings the broth to a boil, pours it over the couscous in a large bowl, and covers it. It steeps quietly — no peeking, no stirring.
2. Sauté the diced squash with the cinnamon, cumin, turmeric and salt for 8–10 minutes until tender and golden. Watch how the turmeric turns everything gold the moment it hits the oil.
3. Chop the pitted dates — sticky and fun.
4. Uncover the couscous and fluff it with two forks. Look how much bigger the grains are than when they went in.
5. Fold in the squash, dates, herbs and a squeeze of lemon. Taste and adjust like a true chef.

Substitutions: Gluten-free: quinoa simmered 15 minutes, or gluten-free corn couscous. Dairy-free and egg-free: naturally both.

Cooking this at home: For a family of four, use 1/2 cup couscous, 3/4 cup broth, a quarter of a butternut squash, and 3 chopped dates. The fluffing moment in step four is the one children remember — let them lift the lid.