

Chycches

Smoked chickpeas in a cheese, cumin & saffron broth



1

The recipe for Chycches is one of a handful in Richard II's cookery book, *Fourme of Cury*, that could be honestly described as vegetarian and vegan. My own version of it is neither, however, using as it does chicken broth, egg yolks and cheese – and, as you see in the picture above, I've served it with roasted chicken. However, the method is straightforward enough to adapt it – or, should I say, *keep* it – plant-based, should you so wish.

My modifications are not without medieval precedent, since a contemporaneous Italian recipe for 'chickpeas for the infirm' suggests both egg yolks and cheese can be 'melted' into the dish's sauce.

I've made one further addition to the recipe – which I immodestly think takes the dish to another level – and that's roasted cumin. Cumin (*comyn*) does appear in medieval English recipes (see, for example, my recipe for [Cumin Chicken with "Quinces"](#)), and when experimenting I just felt the chickpeas were crying out for some of this most wondrous of spices.

The *Fourme of Cury* recipe (c.1390)

Chycches

Take & wrye hem in askes al nyȝt oþer al day, oþer lay hem in hote aymers; at morowe waische hem clene in water; seeþ hem vp & do þerto oyle, garlek hole, saffroun, poudour fort and salt, seeþ it & messe it forth.

Chickpeas

Take and cover them in ashes all night or all day, or lay them in hot embers; in the morning wash them clean in water; simmer them up and add to them oil, whole garlic, saffron, powder fort and salt; simmer it and serve it forth.

It's not too difficult to imagine how the chickpeas would have been imbued with a welcome smokiness from the ashes or embers of a medieval oven. It's possible this process replaced our modern method of pre-soaking dried chickpeas, though I don't wish to be dogmatic about this.

In lieu of a medieval brick oven, I have adapted the method so that a hob-top smoker is used, but if you wish to experiment, you could try smoking the chickpeas overnight in the ashes of your barbeque. Let me know if you do!

My modern adaptation serves 3-4

Ingredients

- 200g (7 ounces) of dried chickpeas, soaked in water for at least 12 hours
- 400mls (13½ fluid ounces) of chicken stock/broth
- a good pinch of saffron, about 20 strands
- 2 plump cloves of garlic, cut into slivers
- a pinch of smoked sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon of powder fort: see [recipe](#); or use black pepper
- 2 large egg yolks, beaten
- 50g (2 ounces) extra mature Cheddar cheese, grated; you could substitute Pecorino
- 1½ teaspoons ground **roasted** cumin: instructions below
- extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- chopped parsley for garnishing, optional

Special equipment

An oven-top smoker

1-2 tablespoons woodchips (e.g., applewood, oak)

Method

You need to start this dish the night before by soaking the dried chickpeas for at least twelve hours. Tip: use enough water to cover them by about 5cm (2 inches).

Strain and rinse the chickpeas before putting them into a pan. First boil them for 15 minutes and then simmer them until quite tender, about 50 minutes. These will be further cooked, both in the smoker and in the broth, so they don't need fully cooking at this stage.

In the meantime, prepare the smoker. Put your woodchips of choice into the bottom, place the inner tray on top of these, and then line the rack with foil – this stops most of the chickpeas falling through.

Then, once the chickpeas are done, drain them and pat them dry with a towel or paper towels. Then transfer them to the tray in the smoker, with the lid not quite fully closed. Heat the smoker on the hob – a medium heat is usually best – and wait for the smoke to come through the lid. Once it does, slide the lid closed and smoke for 30 minutes.

3

Roasted Cumin

Whilst the chickpeas are smoking away, roast some whole cumin seeds. To do this you need a heavy-based frying pan. You don't need any oil. Simply heat the pan on a medium heat, and once it is hot put in about 3 or 4 tablespoons of seeds and keep them moving with a wooden spatula. They take about 5 minutes to roast: their colour will darken slightly and their smell shifts from fresh to a toasted, almost nutty, cumin aroma. Leave to cool, then grind them: I use an old coffee grinder but a pestle and mortar works almost as well, and makes you feel more medieval. You only need 1½ teaspoons for this recipe, so store the remainder in a jar for another day. I promise, you *will* return to use it!

Next, put your stock/broth in a pan that is big enough for the chickpeas. Crumble in the saffron, add the slivers of garlic, the smoked salt, and powder fort (or black pepper); gently simmer for 5 minutes. If you only have *unsmoked* cumin powder, add it at this stage.

Once your chickpeas are smoked, transfer them into the stock/broth, and simmer for 10 minutes, or until the chickpeas are tender but still hold their shape. The chickpeas are not meant to be mushy, but rather still have some bite.

Next, remove the pan off the heat, take a ladle of its broth and put it into a bowl. Allow this to cool a little, then blend in the egg yolks. Tempering the egg yolks this way prevents them from curdling. Return the broth-yolk mixture to the pan and stir through over a gentle heat. You should now have a golden and silky sauce.

Then it's time to stir in the grated cheese and roasted cumin powder. Drizzle with the extra-virgin olive oil. If you wish, sprinkle with fresh parsley. Heavenly!



Thank you

Christopher

© 2022 Monk's Modern Medieval Cuisine



Please feel free to print this recipe for personal use but please also remember that all the material in these pages is copyrighted. If you'd like to share the recipe, consider encouraging others to support me via [Buy Me A Coffee](#) or by subscribing to my [Premium Content](#) as a **Yever**.