

# The Spice of Life- Moroccan Chickpea Stew with Chicken and Lentils

Heat the olive oil in a medium stockpot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper. Add chicken in batches, and cook until well browned, about 4 min. per batch. Remove chicken from pot and set aside. Add the onions and celery and cook until softened, about 4 min. Add ginger, turmeric, pepper, cinnamon, and nutmeg and cook, stirring constantly for 1 min. Return chicken to the pan and add tomatoes and their juices stirring well. Stir in the chicken stock, lentils and chickpeas; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook at a gentle simmer for 1 hour.

Add rice and remaining 1/2 teaspoon of salt and return the soup to simmer. Cook covered for 30 minutes. Remove the lid, add the cilantro, parsley and lemon juice and cook, uncovered for 5 minutes.

Courtesy: Emeril Lagasse, 2005

Turmeric is a popular Indian culinary spice responsible for giving both ballpark mustard and curries their beautiful yellow hue. A member of the ginger family, turmeric has a uniquely pungent and slightly bitter taste. You may have heard it referred to as a 'superfood'; there's a very good reason for this.

With a long history of use in herbal remedies, turmeric has recently entered the spotlight in modern science for its health-giving properties. Turmeric is a strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant offering broad cancer protection. In addition, it is suspected to be very helpful

in protecting the brain from Alzheimer's. Elderly Indian villagers who consume turmeric daily have the world's lowest occurrence of Alzheimer's disease in the world. Researchers are working to confirm this connection. (Dr. Weil.com). Although it may be unrealistic to incorporate the full recommended daily teaspoon of turmeric into our diet, we can certainly enjoy more of it. Turmeric pairs well with fish and roasted chicken, as well as cauliflower, chickpeas, and squash. I have known people who sprinkle it on their morning eggs and add it to egg salad. Turmeric adds a complexity to chili, and of course, curry.

Turmeric adds depth and interest to this hearty and nutritious stew. With just enough heat to brighten a dark December evening, this dish is a great "make ahead" and tastes even better on day 2.