Noodle Soup

Makes 8 servings
Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 3 hours

Osh-e reshteh

VEGETARIAN VARIATION
This is an excellent dish for vegetarians, even vegans, because Persian noodles do not have egg in them. Just replace the broth with water and eliminate the qeymeh.

NOTE
In Iran it is customary to eat noodles before embarking on something new. For us they symbolize the choice of paths among the many that life spreads out before us. Eating those tangled strands is like unraveling the Gordian knot of life’s infinite possibilities in order to pick out the best. Noodles, we believe, can bring good fortune and make new endeavors fruitful. That is why noodles are always served on Nowruz, the Iranian New Year’s Day. Another traditional occasion is on the third day after friends and relatives have gone away on a trip. It is believed that by eating noodles we can send them luck as they follow the path of their journey.

1/4 cup oil
3 large onions, peeled and thinly sliced
5 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
2 teaspoons sea salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon turmeric
1/4 cup dried red kidney beans, washed and soaked in cold water for at least 4 hours, and then drained
1/4 cup dried navy beans, rinsed and soaked for at least 4 hours, then drained
1/4 cup dried chickpeas, rinsed, soaked for at least 4 hours, then drained
12–14 cups broth or water
1 cup lentils
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 fresh beet, peeled and diced in 1/2-inch pieces (optional)
1/2 pound Persian noodles (reshteh) or linguine noodles, broken in half

1 cup coarsely chopped spring onions
1 cup chopped fresh dill weed
2 cups coarsely chopped fresh parsley
3 pounds fresh spinach, washed and coarsely chopped, or 2 pounds chopped frozen spinach
1 1/2 cups liquid kashk*
1/2 cup verjuice (ab-ghureh, unripe grape juice)*

QEMEH
A diced lamb garnish (optional, page 342)

GARNISH (NA’NA DAGH)
2 tablespoons oil
1 onion, peeled and finely sliced
10 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
1 teaspoon turmeric

1/4 cup dried mint flakes, crushed

1. Heat 1/4 cup oil in a large, heavy pot over medium heat until hot. Add the onions and garlic and cook until golden brown. Add salt, pepper, turmeric, kidney beans, navy beans, and chickpeas, and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour in 12 cups broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes over medium heat.

2. Add the lentils, cumin, and beets, cover, and cook for 55 minutes longer. Check to be sure the beans are tender. Use a handheld mixer to partially puree the soup.

3. Add noodles and cook about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

4. Add all the herbs. Cover and cook, stirring from time to time for 10 minutes. Check to be sure the noodles are cooked.

5. Stir in the kashk, saving 2 tablespoons for the garnish. Add the verjuice and stir well with a wooden spoon for 1 minute until the kashk is thoroughly incorporated. Add more warm broth if the osh is too thick. Adjust seasoning to taste. Cover and keep warm until ready to serve.

6. Prepare the qeymeh without the potatoes by following the recipe on page 342.

7. To prepare the garnish: Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a medium-sized skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until golden brown. Add the turmeric, give it a stir, and remove from heat. Crumble the dried mint flakes in the palm of your hand and add it to the skillet. Stir well and set aside.

8. Pour the soup into a tureen. Garnish with the na’na dagh, qeymeh, and a dollop of kashk. Just before serving, use a long-handled ladle to stir the garnish, incorporating it into the soup. Nush-e Jan!