



Turn up THE HEAT

GETTING THE SPICES RIGHT IS THE KEY TO GREAT MOROCCAN FOOD

Low-cooked, aromatic Moroccan tagines are taking over from curries and stews as the hottest dish to serve this winter.

A tagine is the name given to both the North African stew of spiced meat and vegetables and also the shallow earthenware cooking dish with a conical lid in which it is cooked.

Tagines may be fashionable but Moroccan food is not new. As one of the world's oldest cuisines it shows influences of the many cultural groups who have lived there from the native Berbers 2000 years ago to Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Jewish groups.

Moroccan-born chef (top right) Mohamed Bartraouch runs Marrakech Restaurant at Hyde Park and compares the culinary history of his homeland with Australia's own multicultural food scene.

"Morocco is such a multicultural cuisine, so diverse, it's the people who have lived in the country who made it this way," he says.

"Australia is multicultural too, it is such a young country here, you can still clearly see the individual cultures whereas Morocco is much older so it is harder to differentiate the influences."

One of Mohammed's signature dishes at Marrakech is the lamb agha tagine (pictured) which contains many of Morocco's most commonly used spices. Lamb is slow cooked with cinnamon, honey, saffron, caramelised prunes and roasted almonds and sesame seeds.

Another tagine - Dajaj Berber - is made from chicken cooked with the famous Moroccan ras el hanout spice mix which varies but can include up to 54 spices.

"The spices are complex, it's not just about hot, hot chilli but a complex mix of spices and it needs to be perfectly balanced," Mohamed says.

Mohammed also serves traditional Moroccan mint

tea which is very sweet and made with high quality gunpowder tea and plenty of fresh mint. Moroccan tea pots have long, curved pouring spouts and this allows the tea to be theatrically poured evenly into tiny decorative glasses from a height.

"It's the most popular drink in Morocco, families drink mint tea up to seven times a day and it is very refreshing and is also a digestive... it can be addictive!" he says.

Moroccan-born chef Anouar (bottom right) is also bringing Moroccan food to Adelaide at his Taste of Marrakech food stall in the Adelaide Central Market.

The stall is decorated with big bowls of exotic spices including Moroccan mint to zatar, ras el hanout, dry limes and paprika. Anouar grinds his own spice mixes every couple of days which is labour intensive but guarantees freshness.

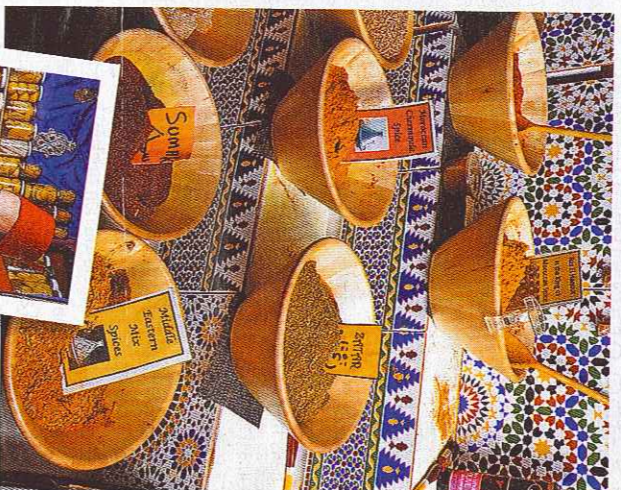
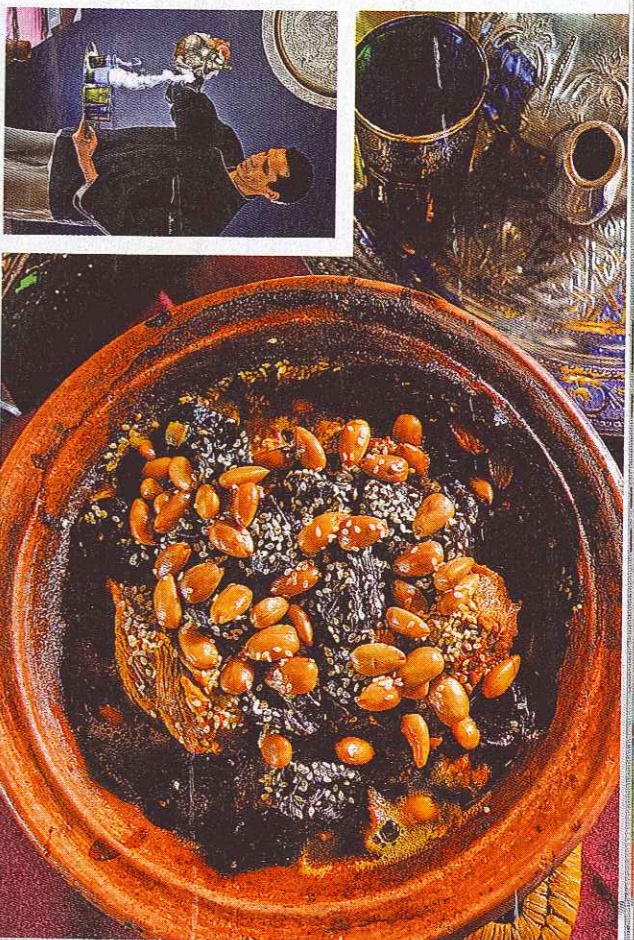
"It's hard to do, you've got to know what you are doing, it's all about getting the balance right," he says.

"It's the easiest cuisine in the world once you have the right spices - people think of spice as hot chilli but it's far more than that and is quite complex.

"A lot of people come to the stall to ask questions and I am happy to give them advice on the right spices they will need for the recipe they want to cook."

Shelves at the stall are lined with jars of his preserved lemons which are a key ingredient in Moroccan cooking and each week he makes his own harissa, a spicy mixture of chillies ground with cumin, garlic, coriander and olive oil.

Anouar, who opened one of Adelaide's first Moroccan restaurants, sells take-home dishes such as Moroccan chicken with preserved lemon and olives; lamb with prunes and almonds or Moroccan meatballs with couscous. He also has a stall at the Adelaide Showgrounds Farmers' Market every Sunday.



HANDS ON

Mohamed Bartraouch from Marrakech Restaurant will host a Moroccan cooking class at Outdoors On Parade Cooking School on Monday, September 12. www.outdoorsonparade.com.au

Anouar Serneh cooks Moroccan food for private dinners and parties and offers cooking classes (ph 0450-613-9911)

Sticky Rice Cooking School at Stirling hosts Tagines from Morocco classes with chef Genevieve Harris in July (sold out), October 14 and November 19.

Moorish Moroccan classes will be held on September 4 with Spirit House chef Katrina Ryan.

Claire Fuller from Sticky Rice is also lining up an ex-chef from arguably the world's best Moroccan restaurant - Momo in London - for classes later this year.

MARTINI RISTORANTE

Welcome to Martini Ristorante, a modern taste of Italy on the Parade

The newly refurbished Martini's has to offer a crisp classy dining room, state of the art function room, out door dining and newly introduced traditional woodoven pizza. We have a traditional pizza maker from Italy who has come over to join our team!

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lunch □ tuesday to friday

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