AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

Braised Monkfish with Saffron and Cured Olives



SERVES Serves 4 to 6

Why This Recipe Works

A traditional North African specialty, a tagine is both the name for a conical cooking vessel and the stew that is cooked inside it. The special shape of a tagine allows steam from the cooking meat and vegetables to condense and drip back down onto the stew, keeping it moist and concentrated in flavor. While a tagine is an attractive and unique piece of cooking equipment, we found that we could get similar results for trapping steam when using a Dutch oven with a heavy lid. We set out to create a Moroccan-style fish tagine with the signature sweet and sour flavors of the region. Meaty monkfish fillets were our go-to choice for this dish, as their firm texture would help them keep their shape while simmering in the pot. For sweetness, we turned to orange zest, onion, carrots, and tomato paste, which, along with fragrant paprika, cumin, dried mint, and saffron, built the base for the tagine's broth. Deglazing the sautéed aromatics with a bottle of clam juice brought in a salty, briny element and created a rich

broth in which to braise the fish. Nestling the fillets into the broth, covering the pot, and turning down the heat allowed all of the flavors to meld while the fish and carrots cooked through. For a salty, sour punch, we finished the sauce by stirring in pungent Moroccan oil-cured olives and a teaspoon of sherry vinegar. Fresh mint completed the dish with bright flavor. Sweet, tangy, vibrantly colored, and perfectly moist, our monkfish tagine offered intense Moroccan flavors in just half an hour.

Gather Your Ingredients

- ◯ **3** (2-inch) strips orange zest
- ◯ **5** garlic cloves, minced
- ◯ **2** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ◯ **1** large onion, halved and sliced 1/4 inch thick
- ◯ **3** carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced 1/4 inch thick
- ◯ Salt and pepper
- ◯ **1** tablespoon tomato paste
- ◯ **1¼** teaspoons paprika

Before You Begin

* Monkfish fillets are surrounded by a thin membrane that needs to be removed before cooking.

Instructions

1. Mince 1 strip orange zest and combine with 1 teaspoon garlic in bowl; set aside.

2. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion, carrots, ¼ teaspoon salt, and remaining 2 strips orange zest and cook until vegetables are softened and lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in remaining garlic, tomato paste, paprika, cumin, dried mint, and saffron and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in clam juice, scraping up any browned bits.

- ◯ **1** teaspoon ground cumin
- ◯ **½** teaspoon dried mint
- ◯ **¼** teaspoon saffron threads, crumbled
- ◯ **1** (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
- ◯ **1½** pounds skinless monkfish fillets, 1 to 1½ inches thick, trimmed and cut into 3-inch pieces
- ◯ **¼** cup pitted oil-cured black olives, quartered
- ◯ **2** tablespoons minced fresh mint
- ◯ **1** teaspoon sherry vinegar

3. Pat monkfish dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Nestle monkfish into pot, spoon some cooking liquid over top, and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer gently until monkfish is opaque in center and registers 140 degrees, 8 to 12 minutes.

4. Discard orange zest. Gently stir in olives, fresh mint, vinegar, and garlic–orange zest mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.