



MENU

To Drink

PROSECCO WITH ROSE PETALS

Shared Plates

MINCED LAMB BRAEWAT

FISH WITH CHERMOULA

SWEET SALAD OF COOKED BEETROOT

EGGPLANT AND PRESERVED

LEMON SALAD

COOKED SALAD OF SILVER BEET

TAGINE OF LAMB AND YOUNG CARROTS

Dessert

SWEET ORANGE BLOSSOM COUSCOUS

FRAGRANT FRUIT SALAD

ALMOND AND SESAME FINGERS

CINNAMON BISCUITS

ALMOND AND ORANGE BISCUITS

MOROCCAN MINT TEA

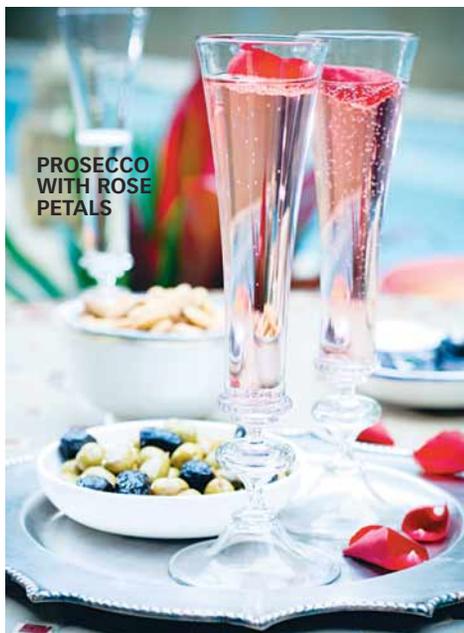
MOROCCAN FEAST

Cookery expert **Meera Freeman** treats her friends to an exotic banquet – and proves why Morocco and its mouthwatering cuisine so captures the imagination.

**SWEET ORANGE
BLOSSOM COUSCOUS**
For recipe, see page 180.

FISH WITH CHERMOULA
For recipe, see page 179.





PROSECCO WITH ROSE PETALS



Meera Freeman entertains her guests.



PROSECCO WITH ROSE PETALS

To set the mood for our fragrant Moroccan feast, splash a little rose liqueur into a tall champagne flute, pour over chilled prosecco and garnish with red rose petals. Prosecco is Italy's version of good sparkling wine and is also the name of the white grape from which it is made, grown in the Veneto region. Any sparkling wine can be used instead.

EGGPLANT AND PRESERVED LEMON SALAD

SERVES 8. PREPARATION 30 MINS (PLUS STANDING TIME). COOKING 20 MINS.

- 3 medium (900g) eggplants
- salt
- 1 medium (200g) red capsicum
- vegetable oil for frying
- 2 small cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon preserved lemon, chopped finely (see Cook's Note)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

- 1 Using a vegetable peeler, remove about half the skin from the eggplant in strips; discard peeled skin. Cut the eggplant into 1-2cm rounds. Place in a colander and sprinkle liberally with salt. Leave to disgorge bitter juices for at least 30 minutes. Rinse eggplant under cold water and squeeze dry; lay the slices on absorbent paper until ready to fry.
 - 2 Meanwhile, quarter the capsicum, discard seeds and membranes. Roast under a grill or in a very hot oven, skin-side up, until skin blisters and blackens. Cover capsicum in plastic or paper for 5 minutes; peel away skin, chop finely.
 - 3 Heat about 2cm of the oil in a heavy-based frying pan and add the unpeeled garlic, which will fry alongside the eggplant until golden and can then be discarded. Cook the eggplant slices in the hot oil until golden brown on both sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on absorbent paper.
 - 4 Cut the eggplant into pieces and combine with the capsicum, preserved lemon, cumin and paprika. Serve salad garnished with parsley.
- Not suitable to freeze or microwave.

COOK'S NOTE: Before using preserved lemon pieces, scrape away and discard the flesh or pulp, then rinse briefly to remove the excess salty flavour. Preserved lemons are available from gourmet food stores and some delicatessens.

"MOROCCAN FOOD IS MEANT to be shared," says Meera Freeman. As the woman behind the Meera Freeman Cooking School, it's a philosophy that Meera, 58, has imparted to many Melbourne food lovers. Today, that generosity of spirit is enjoyed with a collection of friends, who also share her passion for the north African country.

The venue is her home in Melbourne's Carlton, a two-bedroom, two-storey townhouse that Meera, whose past professional lives include stints as a professional translator and TV presenter, has lived in for 12 years, before the gentrification of the inner-urban surrounds mixed a little glamour with the grime.

"No husband, no children, no pets," the once-married Meera says of the exotically independent life she has made for herself. "It's great. I can do whatever I like."

Her earthy strength is reflected in today's menu. This is, Meera says, Moroccan food as it should be: a passionately prepared tagine of lamb, carrot and saffron; a salad of juicy beetroot and delicate rose water; couscous that has been carefully steamed and steamed again, before being bathed in a dressing of milk, orange blossom, cinnamon and icing sugar. "These days, Morocco is the flavour of the month, but nobody does it properly," she says.

Judging by the easy flow of wine and conversation as the plates are passed around, today, it would seem, Meera does. For many of the guests, the gathering is a reunion of a recent trip to Morocco – led by Meera.

"If you like anything Moroccan, you need to do the trip," says The Australian Women's Weekly's nutritionist, Karen Inge. As a neighbour of Meera's, she was one of the 10 lucky women to be part of Meera's tour last April, who saw first-hand why Morocco has captured so many imaginations.

"But there's only one person to do it with," Karen says, nodding at her hostess. ■

– CLAIRE HALLIDAY

LEFT: TALL GLASSES FROM MANON BIS. PLATES WITH PEWTER RIMS AND NAPKIN RINGS FROM CRANFIELDS. CUTLERY, GLASSES AND GLASS VASE FROM MINMAX. VASE AND TILES FROM KASBAH IMPORTS. RIGHT: PLATES FROM KASBAH IMPORTS. SILVER TRAY FROM TURNER & LANE.



COOKED SALAD OF SILVER BEET
For recipe, see overleaf.

EGGPLANT AND PRESERVED LEMON SALAD

WINE NOTES
Meera writes, "Because the dishes are spiced rather than spicy, I suggest whites with a flat finish, such as an unwooded chardonnay, pinot grigio or verdelho. For the lamb, try a very light, uncomplicated red or even a rosé, such as Turkey Flat. For the dessert/pastries, you can't go past a moscato d'asti!"

SWEET SALAD OF COOKED BEETROOT
For recipe, see overleaf.

COOKED SALAD OF SILVER BEET

SERVES 8. PREPARATION 15 MINS.
COOKING 45 MINS (PLUS COOLING TIME).
You will need one bunch of silver beet.

- 1kg silver beet
- 1 litre (4 cups) water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup (60ml) vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped finely
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

- 1 Wash the silver beet well, trim and string the stems. Cut the stems and leaves into small pieces.
- 2 Combine water, salt and silver beet (stems and leaves) in a large saucepan. Bring to the boil, then simmer gently for about 30 minutes; drain and cool.
- 3 In a medium frying pan, combine the oil, garlic, spices and juice, then add the cooked silver beet. Simmer over a low heat for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer silver beet mixture to a serving dish and allow to cool completely before serving.

Not suitable to freeze. Suitable to microwave.

SWEET SALAD OF COOKED BEETROOT

SERVES 8. PREPARATION 15 MINS.
COOKING 3 HOURS.

- 1kg fresh beetroot, trimmed
- salt to taste
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon rose water (see Cook's Note)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, approximately

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C/160°C fan-forced.
- 2 Place the unpeeled beetroot into a baking dish, cover tightly with foil and bake for about 3 hours or until tender. (This method of cooking will prevent it from losing its colour). When cool enough to handle, remove skin.
- 3 Cut beetroot into 1cm cubes and season with the salt, cumin and cinnamon. Stir in the juice, rose water and enough olive oil to coat the beetroot. Serve at room temperature.

Not suitable to freeze or microwave.

COOK'S NOTE: Rose water is a natural flavouring made from the diluted essence of distilled rose petals. There's a variation in potency, so add half the quantity required and taste for flavour and aroma.

MINCED LAMB BRAEWAT (PASTRIES)

MAKES 16. PREPARATION 30 MINS.
COOKING 35 MINS (PLUS COOLING TIME).

- 4 sheets filo pastry
- olive oil for shallow-frying

COOK'S NOTE:

Braewat describes sweet or savoury filled parcels using "ouarqa" pastry. Ouarqa is a traditional Moroccan pastry made by dabbing a piece of dough onto a hot surface to form a paper-thin layer. Greek filo pastry is a suitable substitute.



MINCED LAMB BRAEWAT

large pinch ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon icing sugar

FILLING

2 tablespoons olive oil

250g minced lamb

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

¼ teaspoon dried chilli flakes

¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh

coriander leaves

1 small (80g) onion, chopped finely

1 teaspoon salt

3 eggs, beaten lightly

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 FILLING: Heat the oil in a medium frying pan, add the mince, cumin, paprika, chilli, herbs, onion and salt; cook, stirring, for about 20 minutes over moderate heat, until browned all over and cooked through.

2 Reserve about 1 tablespoon of the beaten eggs. Add the remaining eggs and cinnamon to the lamb mixture, cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. Set aside to cool.

3 Cut the filo pastry sheets in half lengthways, then in half crossways, to form approximately 14cm x 22cm rectangles. Place one tablespoon of the Filling on lower third of short side of one pastry strip. Turn in sides of the pastry and roll up to form a cigar shape, brushing edge lightly with a little reserved beaten egg to secure. Repeat with remaining Filling and pastry. Cover pastry rolls under a damp tea towel to prevent them from drying out.

4 Shallow-fry pastry rolls in hot oil, in batches, turning once, until golden brown. Drain on absorbent paper.

5 Sprinkle with combined sifted cinnamon and icing sugar. Serve immediately.

Uncooked pastry rolls suitable to freeze.

Not suitable to microwave.

FISH WITH CHERMOULA

SERVES 8. PREPARATION 20 MINS (PLUS REFRIGERATION TIME). COOKING 15 MINS.

8 small (750g) skinless flathead fillets

1 cup (150g) plain flour

2 eggs, approximately

1 teaspoon water

vegetable oil for shallow-frying

lemon wedges, for serving

CHERMOULA

1 bunch coriander

1 large clove garlic, crushed

large pinch salt

1½ teaspoons sweet paprika

pinch hot paprika

1 tablespoon ground cumin

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 tablespoons water

1 CHERMOULA: Wash and dry coriander, removing the roots and making sure any sand is removed. Combine all the ingredients in a blender jug and process until smooth.

2 Cut the fish into pieces. Combine the fish and Chermoula in a large bowl, cover, refrigerate for at least two hours.

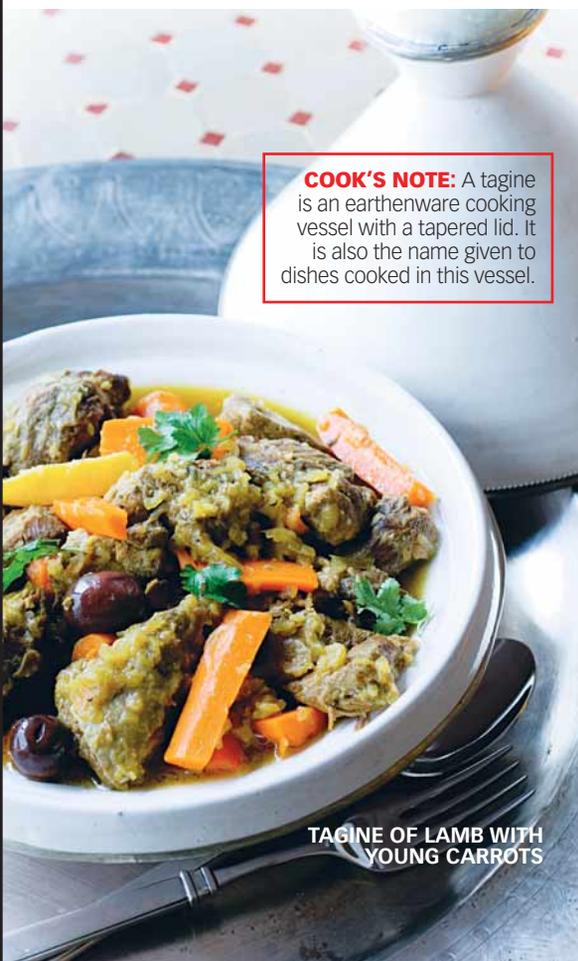
3 Drain fish well from Chermoula mixture, then toss the fish in the flour, shaking away any excess. Dip the floured fish in the combined beaten egg and the water, drain off any excess.

4 Shallow-fry the fish, in batches, in the hot oil until crisp and brown on both sides; drain on a wire rack or absorbent paper.

5 Sprinkle with salt and serve immediately with lemon.

Not suitable to freeze or microwave.

COOK'S NOTE: Chermoula is a marinade principally used for fish.



COOK'S NOTE: A tagine is an earthenware cooking vessel with a tapered lid. It is also the name given to dishes cooked in this vessel.

TAGINE OF LAMB WITH YOUNG CARROTS

TAGINE OF LAMB WITH YOUNG CARROTS

SERVES 8. PREPARATION 20 MINS. COOKING 2 HOURS 5 MINS.

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon saffron threads
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup (125ml) water
- 2kg boned lamb forequarter, cut into large pieces
- 2 medium (300g) onions, sliced thinly
- 3 stems fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 3 stems fresh coriander
- 500g small carrots
- 12 large brown or violet olives
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced preserved lemon

- 1 In a large bowl, combine the salt, pepper, ginger and saffron, with the oil and water. Add the lamb; stir until lamb is well coated in spice mixture.
- 2 Place onion in a tagine (see Cook's Note), shallow flameproof casserole dish or large shallow saucepan, then place lamb on top. Add parsley and coriander, and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for about 1½ hours or until lamb is tender.
- 3 Meanwhile, peel carrots and cut in half lengthways and then in half crossways.
- 4 Remove the parsley and coriander, and add the carrot to the tagine. Simmer for a further 30 minutes or until tender.
- 5 Add the olives and preserved lemon, and simmer for a further 5 minutes.
- 6 Using a slotted spoon, transfer the



MOROCCAN MINT TEA

lamb and carrot to a serving dish. Garnish with the olives and lemon rind. Taste the sauce and adjust seasoning if necessary. Pour the sauce over the lamb and carrot, and serve hot with bread. Suitable to freeze. Not suitable to microwave.

SWEET ORANGE BLOSSOM COUSCOUS

SERVES 8. PREPARATION 30 MINS (PLUS STANDING TIME). COOKING 40 MINS.

- 500g fine couscous
- 2 large pinches of salt
- 1 cup (250ml) cold water
- 1 cup (160g) blanched whole almonds
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup (250ml) milk
- 75g soft butter
- 1 cup (160g) icing sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange blossom water
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

- 1 Place the couscous in a fine strainer and wet thoroughly under the cold tap. Spread the couscous onto a large oven tray. Sprinkle couscous with salt. Let the couscous absorb the water until it's quite dry and a solid mass has formed. Roll couscous between the palms of your hands to separate the grains and place in an Asian sticky rice steamer or a metal steamer lined with muslin. Steam couscous, uncovered, over boiling water for 20 minutes. Turn out the couscous onto the oven tray and add the measured cold water; stand until the water is absorbed. Loosen grains with a fork and separate them with your hands as soon as they are cool enough to handle. Steam the couscous for a further 15 minutes or until it is soft and light.
- 2 Meanwhile, fry almonds in the vegetable oil, taking care not to burn them. Using a

slotted spoon, remove almonds from the pan and chop coarsely.

- 3 Spread couscous back onto the oven tray and moisten with the milk, butter, half the icing sugar and the orange blossom water. When all the milk is absorbed, pile the couscous into a pyramid shape on a serving plate. Top with remaining sifted icing sugar and sprinkle over cinnamon in a striped pattern. Sprinkle the almonds around the couscous. Serve at room temperature. Not suitable to freeze or microwave.

MOROCCAN MINT TEA

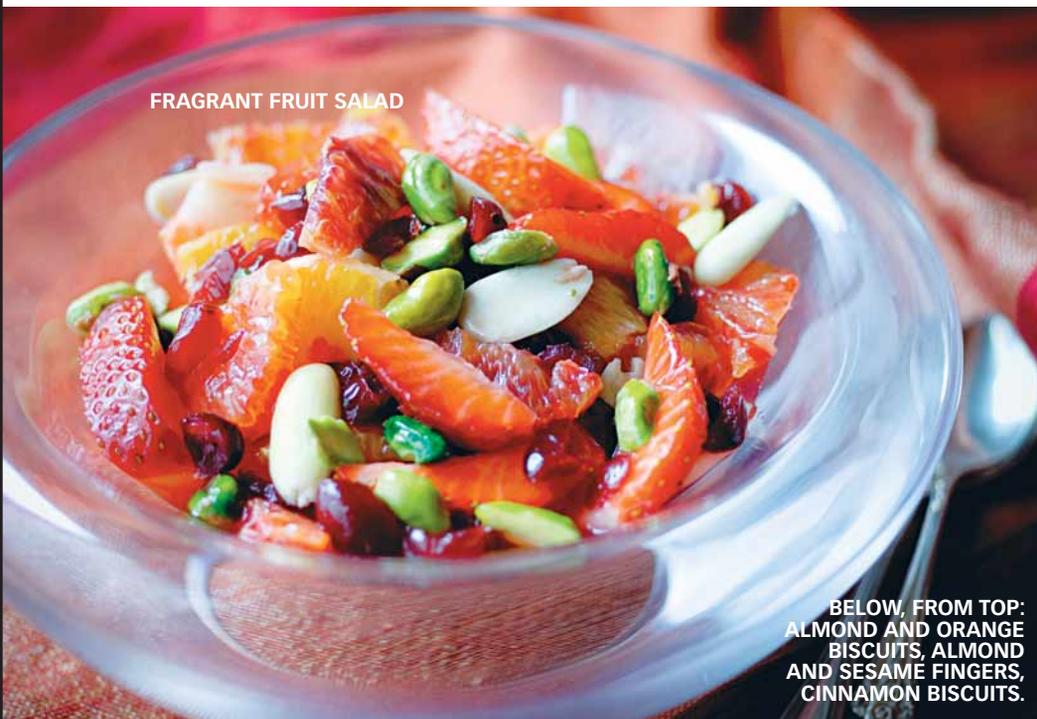
SERVES 8. PREPARATION 10 MINS (PLUS STANDING TIME). COOKING 5 MINS.

- 1½ tablespoons gunpowder green tea (loose leaves)
- 1 bunch mint (spearmint), washed well
- sugar cubes

- 1 Scald a flameproof teapot with boiling water, add tea leaves. Swirl the pot and pour water out immediately through spout. This rinses the tea leaves so that the tea is clear. Add a handful of mint to the teapot and pour boiling water over it.
- 2 Add sugar to taste and allow to draw for about 2 minutes (over a low gas flame, if possible).
- 3 Pour some of the tea into a heatproof glass and then pour it back into the teapot. Repeat this process and then pour into a small glass to taste. Add more sugar, if required.
- 4 Place a small sprig of mint into each glass and pour the tea into the glasses to only ¾ full. This will allow the aroma to develop. Traditionally, each guest should be offered three glasses of tea. Make more as needed. Not suitable to freeze or microwave.

LEFT: TAGINE AND TABLE FROM ZELU MOROCCAN INTERIORS. RIGHT: SILVER TRAY AND TEA GLASSES FROM ZELU MOROCCAN INTERIORS.

FRAGRANT FRUIT SALAD



BELOW, FROM TOP: ALMOND AND ORANGE BISCUITS, ALMOND AND SESAME FINGERS, CINNAMON BISCUITS.

FRAGRANT FRUIT SALAD

Meera combines a mixture of the season's best fruit in a lovely fragrant fruit salad. She uses fruit such as oranges, pink grapefruit, blood oranges, strawberries, blanching dried cranberries or pomegranates, with a splash of orange blossom water and blanching pistachios and almonds.

ALMOND AND SESAME FINGERS

MAKES ABOUT 40. PREPARATION 30 MINS. COOKING 15 MINS PER TRAY.

- 4 cups (500g) almond meal
- 1½ cups (240g) icing sugar
- 2 drops almond essence
- 1 tablespoon orange blossom water
- 20g butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon water, approximately
- 1 egg white
- ½ teaspoon water, extra
- 1⅔ cups (250g) toasted sesame seeds

- 1 Preheat oven to 170°C/150°C fan-forced.
 - 2 Combine almond meal and sifted icing sugar in a large bowl, add almond essence, orange blossom water, butter and add enough water to bring mixture together; knead into firm paste. Firmly press level tablespoons of mixture into small logs.
 - 3 Dip each log into the combined egg white and extra water, then roll each log in the sesame seeds, pressing seeds on firmly to completely cover logs.
 - 4 Carefully place logs on oven trays lined with baking paper, about 3cm apart; bake for about 15 minutes or until they just start to colour. Remove from the oven. Allow to cool on trays before storing in an airtight container.
- Suitable to freeze. Not suitable to microwave.



CINNAMON BISCUITS

MAKES ABOUT 50. PREPARATION 30 MINS (PLUS REFRIGERATION TIME). COOKING 20 MINS PER TRAY.

- 250g unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (220g) caster sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 cups (300g) plain flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- walnut halves

- 1 Preheat the oven to 160°C/140°C fan-forced.
 - 2 Beat the butter, sugar and egg yolk in a small bowl with an electric mixer until combined. Stir in the combined sifted flour, baking powder and cinnamon, mixing until a soft dough is formed. Cover, refrigerate for 1 hour.
 - 3 Roll heaped teaspoons of mixture into balls. Place balls on oven trays lined with baking paper, flatten with a fork. Press a walnut half in the top of each biscuit and bake for about 20 minutes or until browned.
- Suitable to freeze. Not suitable to microwave.

ALMOND AND ORANGE BISCUITS

MAKES ABOUT 30. PREPARATION 30 MINS (PLUS REFRIGERATION TIME). COOKING 20 MINS.

- 2 cups (250g) ground almonds (meal)
- 2 drops almond essence
- 1 egg white
- ½ cup (110g) caster sugar
- ½ cup (85g) mixed peel, chopped finely
- 1 tablespoon orange blossom water
- 1 cup (160g) icing sugar, approximately
- 1 tablespoon mixed peel, extra

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan-forced.
 - 2 Combine the almond meal, essence, egg white, sugar, mixed peel and orange blossom water in a medium bowl. Stir until mixture forms a smooth paste. Cover, refrigerate for 30 minutes.
 - 3 Roll heaped teaspoons of mixture into balls, then roll in the sifted icing sugar to coat. Top with a small piece of the extra mixed peel.
 - 4 Bake for 5 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 160°C/140°C fan-forced and bake for a further 10 to 15 minutes, taking care not to let biscuits brown.
- Suitable to freeze. Not suitable to microwave.

For more information regarding Meera's cooking school or gastronomic tours, go to www.meerafreeman.com.au