

Even if the entire meal isn't Moroccan, she'll sometimes enliven an American dinner with a dessert matching her memories, such as sliced oranges drifted with sugar and cinnamon. Or couscous, the tiny pasta-like grain essential to northern African cooking, will be drizzled with pineapple juice and studded with pomegranate seeds.

"So simple," Crookston says. "So good."

MOROCCAN BEEF WITH PRUNES

Makes 4 to 5 servings.

2 1/2- to 3-pound economy beef pot roast

2 teaspoons oil

3/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon pepper

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon saffron (optional)

1 tomato, cut up

1 onion, chopped

1/2 cup cilantro leaves

12 ounces prunes

1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

5 tablespoons sugar

Honey

Toasted sesame seeds

Cooked rice, if desired

To cook meat: Cut pot roast into small chunks. Heat oil in bottom of Dutch oven, heavy pan or, if you have it, a ceramic tagine (Moroccan cooking vessel). Add beef. Season with cinnamon, pepper, salt and saffron, if desired. Add tomato pieces, chopped onion and cilantro. Turn heat to low. Cook just until enough juices are released so meat won't burn. Cover pan tightly. Simmer for 1 1/2 hours, checking occasionally to make sure it's not scorching.

To stew prunes: In another saucepan, combine prunes with water to cover. Add nutmeg, cinnamon and sugar. Stew for 30 minutes. Drain prunes.

To serve: When meat is done, arrange on platter. Cover meat with prunes. Drizzle with honey. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. If desired, surround meat with small mounds of cooked rice. More typically, juices would be mopped up with Moroccan Bread.

MOROCCAN BREAD

Makes 2 loaves.

1 tablespoon yeast dissolved in 1/4 cup warm water

1/2 cup milk, scalded

1 tablespoon sugar

1 1/2 tablespoons oil (olive or vegetable)

1 cup cool water