

Fennel –Foeniculum vulgare –Bisbès (en arabe)

FENNEL COUSCOUS (Zohra Adda Attou's recepe)



INGREDIENTS (pour 4 à 6 personnes)

- 500 g couscous (**fine grain**)
- 250 g tinned crushed tomatoes (or 500 g fresh tomatoes to peel and cut into thick slices)
- 1 table spoon of tomato purée
- 1 stock-cube (optional, but it might replace salt and season nicely the dish)
- 1 big oignon
- ½ litre of water for the sauce... and a bit more to moisten the couscous grain
- 1 tea spoon salt, and pepper
- 1 teaspoon of *ras el hanout* (meaning literally : *the head of the grocery*)
- **300 g (more or less!) wild fennel**
- **olive oil**

UTENSILS

- 1 couscous steamer
- 1 colander
- 1 thick-bottomed saucepan
- 2 stirring bowls
- 1 sharp knife
- 1 cutting-board
- 1 wooden spoon
- AND your hands !!

- Before all, finely chop the **wild fennel**, but keep only the « leaves » (looking like dill) and the fine and tender tips of the stems. Rinse it thoroughly, press it, and leave it to drain in the colander.

- The **sauce** now: in your saucepan, brown the diced oignons in 2 table spoons of olive oil, add the tomato purée, the crushed tomatoes, the *ras el hanout*, the salt (or the stock cube), the pepper, and the water (½ litre). Mix it together, and simmer covered for 20 minutes.

- Pour the **couscous grain** into one of the stirring bowl; sprinkle with 2 table spoons of olive oil, adding salt ; mix it **with you two hands**, moisten with a bit of water, little by little, blending it deep into the couscous grain.

Do not forget to put water in the lower part of your couscous steamer, pour the couscous grain into the upper part of it (you may use instead a *couscous vegetal basket*, as used in Algeria), heat under the steamer, and stop the cooking as soon as you see steam escape from the upper part of the steamer. Pour back the couscous grain into the stirring bowl, and moisten it again with water. Mix well. Lay a thick coat of fennel (all you have picked and chopped) at the bottom of the upper part of the steamer (or you arabic basket), pour back on top of it the couscous grain, and steam it for the second time. When the steam appears, as mentioned above, stop the cooking, pour back the fennel and couscous grain into the second stirring bowl, (a large one!) and thoroughly stir the fennel and couscous together. (You may steam the mixture for a third time, or not, according to your taste : a *moist*, or an *al-dente* couscous). Just after this second, (or third) cooking), you may add the **sauce**, making sure all the ingredients are thoroughly incorporated.

You may eat it hot, and it will go wonderfully well with a grilled, or roasted fish...

You may eat it cold, as a starter ; in this case it becomes a very original and tasty *fennel taboule*...

DELICIOUS !